

Case Number 237: Final Report

Intake: problem with seventeen year old son, not carrying out his responsibilities; Father feels they are at an impasse.

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The main problem between the father and son was that they weren't communicating; and, when they did communicate, it was to point out a fault ~~or~~ or to complain. The feelings in the first session were very tense, neither would look at the other. The father felt resentful that the son didn't carry out his responsibilities around the house; the son felt the father was always complaining to him about how he ate (organic food, not meat); about how he lived.

The goals set up almost immediately were a) to have a written list which the son and father both agreed upon enumerating the son's responsibilities. Nothing which was not on the list was the son's responsibility. In this way we could tell what in fact the son was or was not doing; and we could tell what the son's responsibilities were, so that he wouldn't feel his father was constantly laying new trips on him. b) The second goal was to get the father and son to work together on fun things, to share common activities, and to say nice things to each other. Apparently from both their statements, neither ever gave positive social praise--verbal or non-verbal--to the other.

In the first session the father said, I don't even want to look at him. I asked him to put his hand on the son's knee. He said, I can, but I don't want to. He did, and they both began to cry. Both have a great deal of warmth and affection for each other.

We also spent a lot of time in the sessions going through communication exercises: e.g., the ~~the~~ idea of feedback: is this what you mean (paraphrasing); the idea of reflection, of saying, "are you feeling that I....."

Also the use of I statements were discussed. Rather than lay the blame outside: you did this wrong, to say, I'm feeling like.... That way blame isn't layed on the other person so that they become defensive. Also, the idea of pausing to see if the other person is done.

There began to be immediate progress: the son bringing the father breakfast in bed, the father helping the son in the yard, the father saying fewer things about ~~the~~ organic food to the son;

~~The~~ In later sessions we discussed the need to reinforce successive approximations. The father ~~was~~ (who made a list each week of the son's irritating activities) would often criticize the way his son was doing a task. I asked if it were better than it had been before. The father said yes, but not good enough. I pointed out the importance of noting the improvement, the fact that the son was trying, and that to criticize it would extinguish the son's attempts.

We began to monitor social reinforcements. The son gave his father/during the week, and the father gave his son two. (Week of 3/4). The son brought in his charts, and he agreed to their fairness, and renewed his commitment to do the things on them. (The week before he had been very slack, had not done any of the activities, and had forgotten to bring in this data charts). I had them role play: the father play the son to see how the son was feeling, the son play the father to see how the father was feelings. This helped both to see how the other person was feeling from the other persn's perspective

4/12, the father said, "we have hit the crisis point." Very bad vibrations between the two. The son hadn't gotten a job. W^h looked at the son's list, and it turned out

he had done quite a few things that he was supposed to do. Their social reinforcement in the house had dropped back down to zero.

Therefore, for the coming week they were to make dinner for each other, have dinner together, and then the person that made the dinner was to clean the dishes. We discussed both the time and the nature of the dinner. Further, they were to make the goal of saying three positive things to each other per day (e.g., hi, hello, and to write down what these things were.)

The next week (4/21) the father had praised his son for helping to get the car fixed, for getting a job, for cleaning the kitchen better, the father was also pleased that they were going to be spending a week-end together, (the son had agreed to accompany the father).

They took the weekend together, had dinner together which they both said they enjoyed. We did some more role playing to get them to see things from other's view point, restressing the importance of seeing how the other feels, and getting out of one's own perspective. A sheet to record positive statements to each other was given. There was a lot better feelings between them, things are beginning to be lubricated.

Summary;

- a) son data charts: (to cover the area of responsibility)
as soon as he would do them, and agreed to their fairness, it kept his father off his back
- b) social reinforcers: verbal, non-verbal (3 X a week)
for successive approximations
- c) communication theory:
I-statements
pauses after speaking
art of paraphrasing and reflecting
- d) role playing: to get each to see from the other's perspective.
- e) shared activities:
dinner (2 times a week)
camping trip
- f) son got job.