

Experiential Approaches to Reveal Dynamics and Relationship Issues

CHINESE PROVERB

**“What I hear, I forget.
What I see, I remember.
What I do, I understand.”**

A vibrant tropical beach scene. In the foreground, a large palm tree trunk and fronds are on the left. A small, wooden, rowboat is beached on the left side of a sandy cove. The water is a clear turquoise color, with gentle waves lapping at the shore. In the distance, a dense line of palm trees marks the shore of a small, green island. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

How we remember ...





**Was it words
that we
remembered?**





Remembering all too well ...

JAWS







PSYCHO



How do we learn?





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“I never said
that
you stole
“





Mapping

parental child



mom



dad



work

.....



jealous
sister



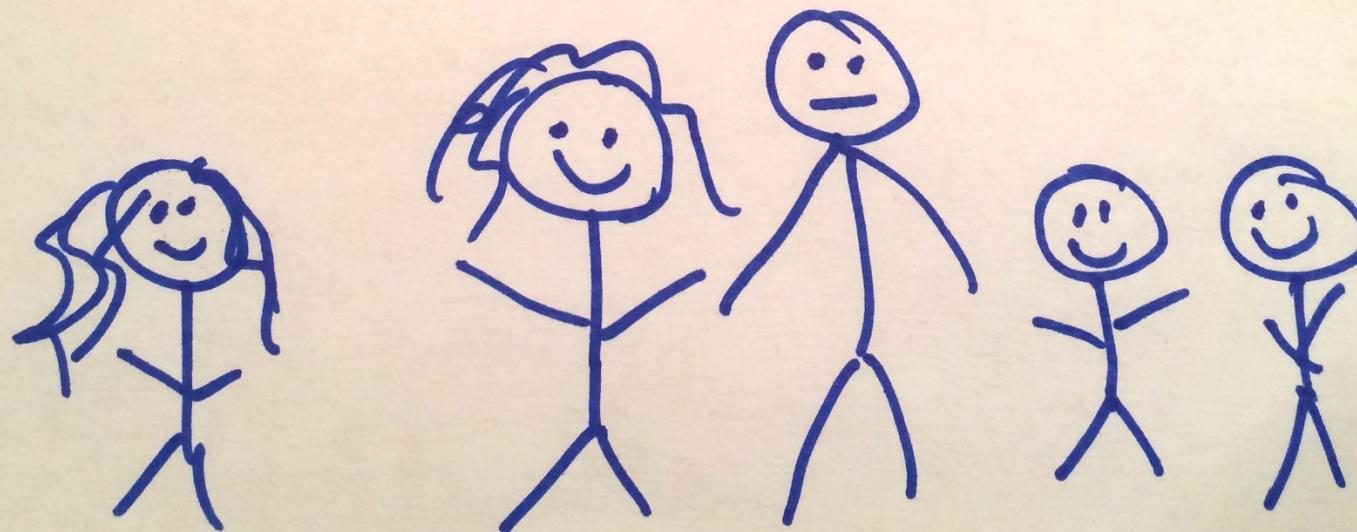
loyal
daughter

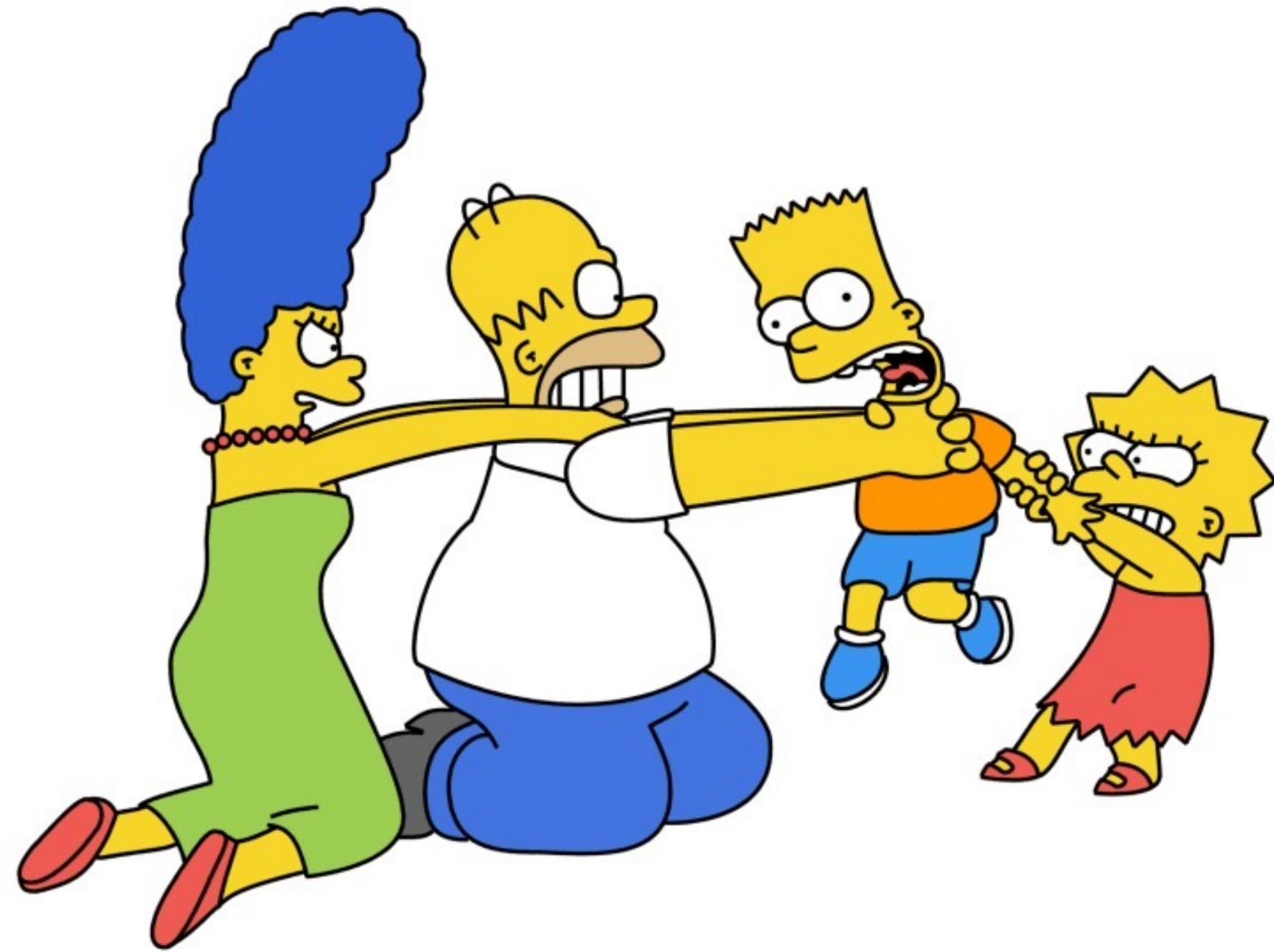


confused, detached,
angry son
(identified patient)

Emotional Space

my
Family







Kinetic Family Drawings



Using Dollhouse Figures

**Setting
Extra
Chairs**



**To See
Emotional
Distance**

Clinical Case Example:

**“The Onset of
Schizophrenia
in a Teenager”**



Clinical Case Example:

“Shrinking Away into Anorexia

Let's stand up for a moment.

Let's stand up for a moment.
Now move to where you feel
most comfortable ...

Let's stand up for a moment.

Now move to where you feel
most comfortable ...

Who would you be closest to?

Let's stand up for a moment.
Now move to where you feel
most comfortable ...
Who would you be closest to?
Move to where you *want* to be.

Let's see what a
“Typical Evening”
at home
would look like ...



tired Mom
in kitchen

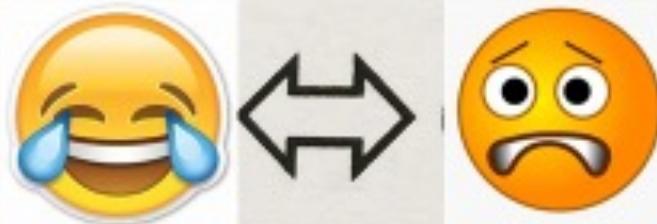


helpful daughter
assisting Mom

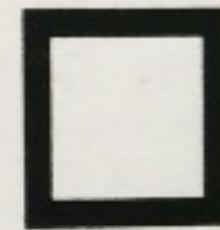


daughter doing
homework

in bedroom



two sons fighting
over video games



Dad watching TV
in family room



Visual Historical Assessment

Starting Out as a Couple

Effects from Parents, Jobs, Close Friends

Adding Children

Losing Grandparents, Jobs, Child

Effects of Alcohol, Pills, Abuse

Sculpting the Family Dynamics

All family members: Living, Deceased, Absent, Distant

Effects of Parents, Grandparents -- Living or Deceased

**Interfering Habits, Addictions, Distractions,
Preoccupations**

Significant Others, Strong Influences or Beliefs

Therapist Position in the Family Picture

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Strength of Relations

Use of ropes (jump ropes)

Long single

Double shorter

Strong,
3- 4 ropes

Captive, tied up

Who clings?

Who lets go?

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Strong Emotions

Arms crossed

Back turned
to others

Hands
cover
eyes

Plastic gun

Rubber knife

Fetal position in corner

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Distractions

Infidelity

Job Hours

Finances

Serious Illness

Bullying at School

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Strong Influences

Religion

the Boss

Grandparents

Ex-Spouses

Politics

Close Friends

Money

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Conditions / Labels

“Crazy One”

Disabled

Retarded

Troublemaker

“Daddy’s Little Girl”

“Mama’s Golden Boy”

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Addictions

Alcohol

Spending \$\$

Street Drugs

Prescription Pills

Gambling

Social Media

Pornography

Work

Helping the Invisible Become Visible

Impacting Events

Death

Empty Nest

Job Loss

Possible Divorce

Cancer

Disabling Injury

Emotional Age Exercise

Father	(age 42)	7, 11, 6, 8, 5	avg = 7
Mother	(age 36)	10, 12, 13, 15, 14	avg = 13
Richard	(age 16)	24, 21, 19, 22, 28	avg = 23
Susan	(age 13)	16, 15, 16, 18, 17	avg = 16
Billy	(age 8)	10, 9, 10, 8, 9	avg = 9

“The Family Zoo” Exercise

Father	Grizzly Bear, Lion, Gorilla, Tiger, German Shepherd
Mother	Lamb, Pony, Sheep, Kitten, Love Bird
Richard	Hawk, Rat, Doberman, Weasel, Cobra
Susan	Raccoon, Owl, Squirrel, Cat, Poodle
Billy	Bunny, Puppy, Kitty, Guinea Pig, Hamster

FAMILY WORLDS

The Courtroom

The Sports Arena

Military

The Family Buffet

Departments of
Government

The Shopping Mall

Role Discovery through Playful Activity

Who takes charge? Who offers a plan or ideas?

Who is eager to participate? Who is not?

Who sabotages the activity? Who won't participate?

Who competes or fights for control?

Whose silence is powerful? Who acts helpless?

Who is the best helper? Who is the peacemaker?

The Empty Chair

VENTING

Good-byes

Differentiation

Unwanted Intruders

Unfinished Business

Rehearsal

Emotional Impact

Absent Members

GRIEF

Personal Contact Letters / Mail to Heaven

Guided Imagery Contact / Advice

Empty Chair Conversation

Fantasy Funeral

Afterlife Drawings – Joys & Fears

Complicated Grief – Emotional Release Letters

Metaphoric Imagery & Sculpting

- 1. Imagine for a moment that your partner / other person takes the form of either an animal, object, place, food item, or famous person. What image feels right to you?**
- 2. Now imagine what image **you** would become in relation to the other person's image that you just imagined. What animal, object, place, food item, or famous person feels right for yourself?**

Metaphoric Imagery & Sculpting

How do these images relate? Friendly? Oppositional?
Intimate? Disconnected?

What kind of **action** is taking place?

Act these images out and see how they feel for each person.

How about trying some role reversals?

What image would you each become when **angry**?

During intimacy? While parenting the kids?

When dealing with **money** and **bills**?

When visiting the **in-laws**? Going with friends to the **bar**?

What image would you each become when ...

---- **on the job around co-workers?**

---- **on vacation with the family?**

**What image did each of your parents
typically become when dealing with each other?**

See any similarities or repeating patterns?

Try this exercise with the whole family ...

CASE REVIEW

Supervision Exercise

Important Considerations

Emotional Space (Therapist idea, Family corrections)

Emotional Ages (Show impressions)

Add Props

(to depict Influences, Ties, Distractions, Obstructions)

Invite Feedback (Participants, Observers)

Position of Therapist in Display

“Unintentional Alignment”



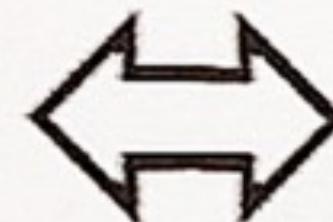
husband



therapist



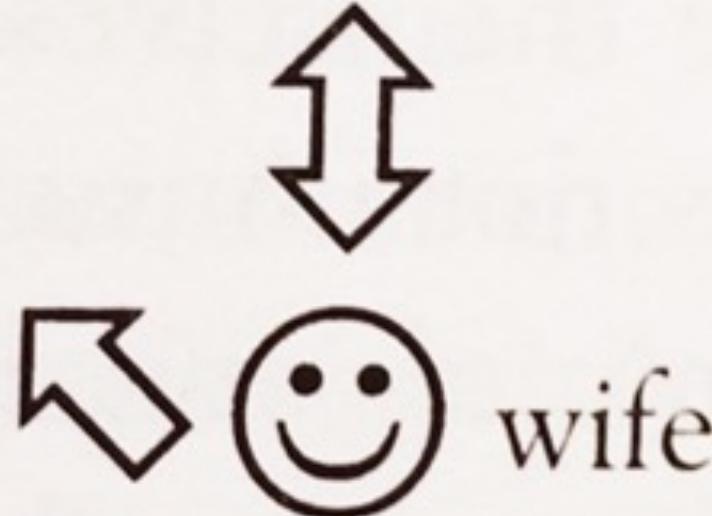
wife



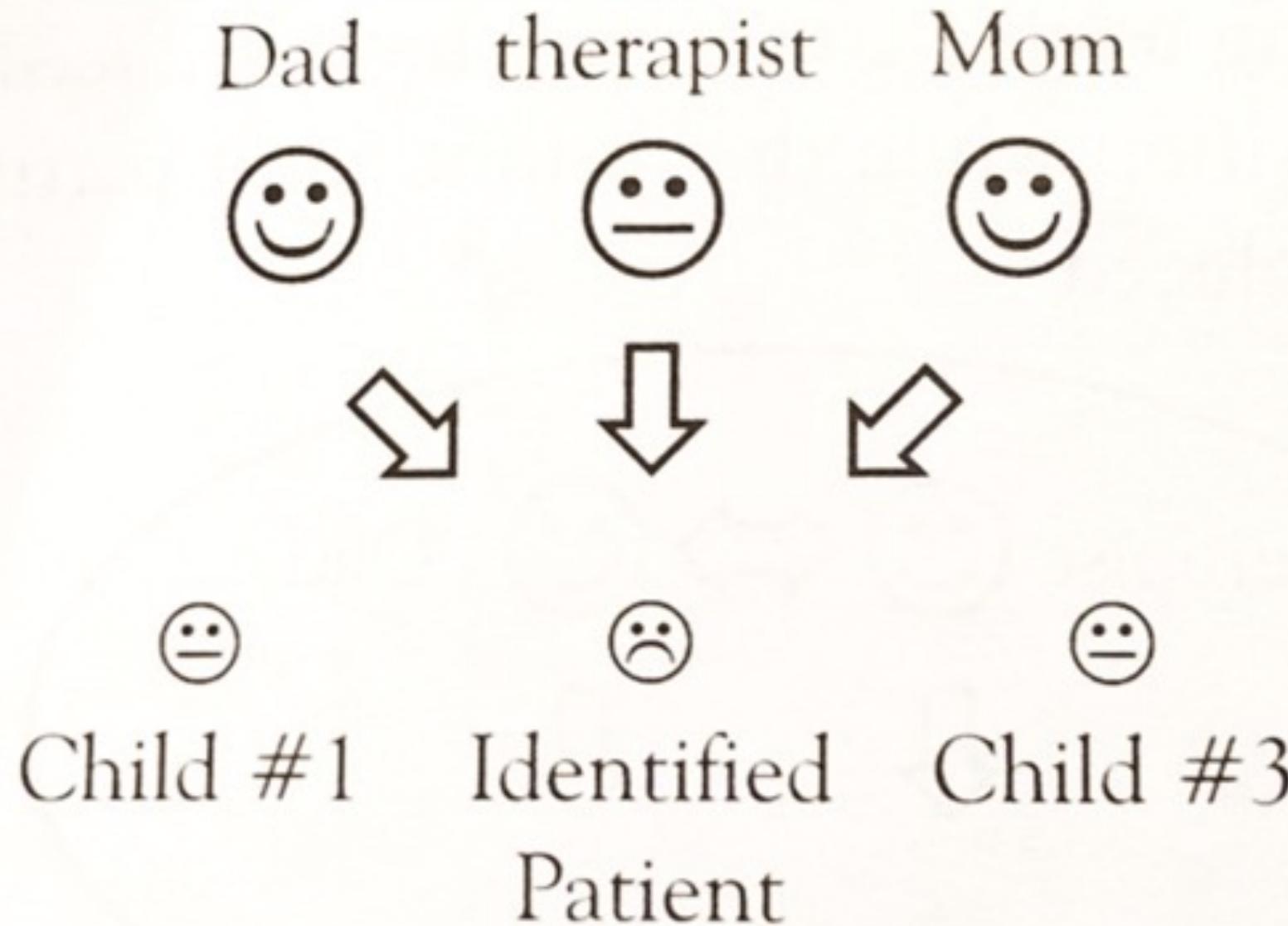
“Deliberate Alignment”



husband



“Adults vs. the Kids”



“Bad Parents”



the children

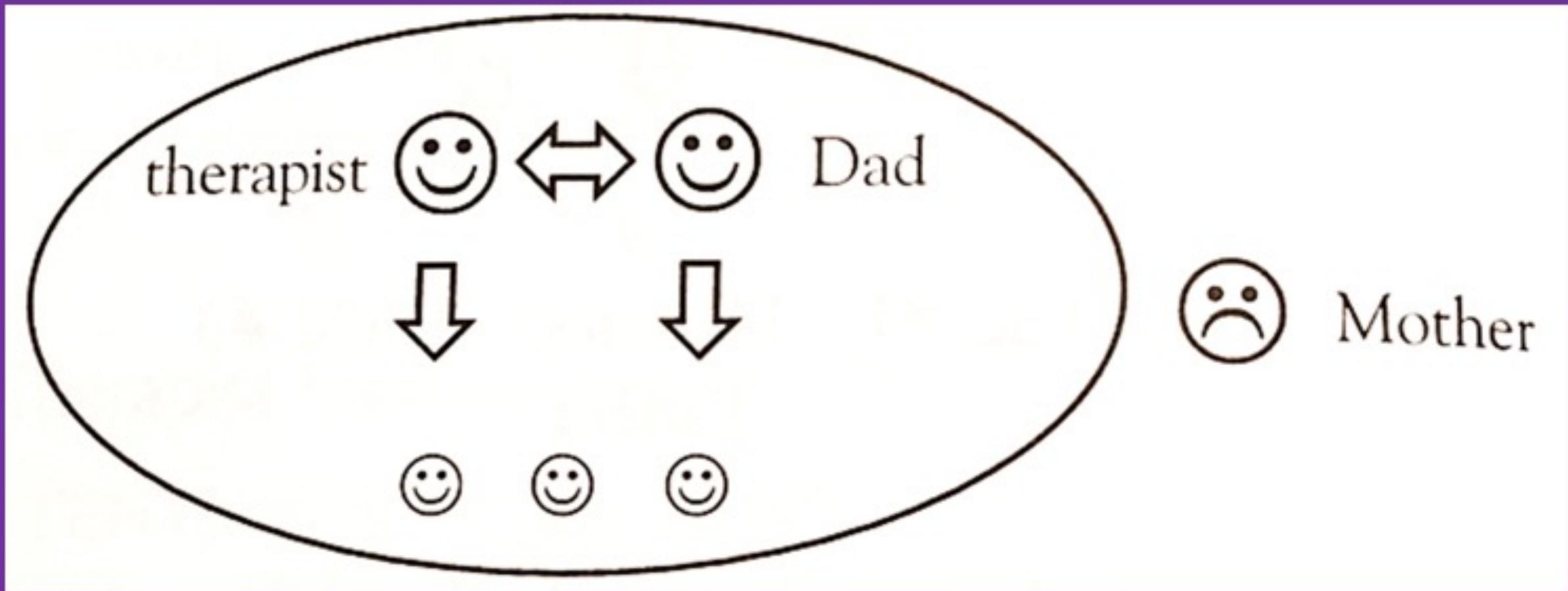


therapist

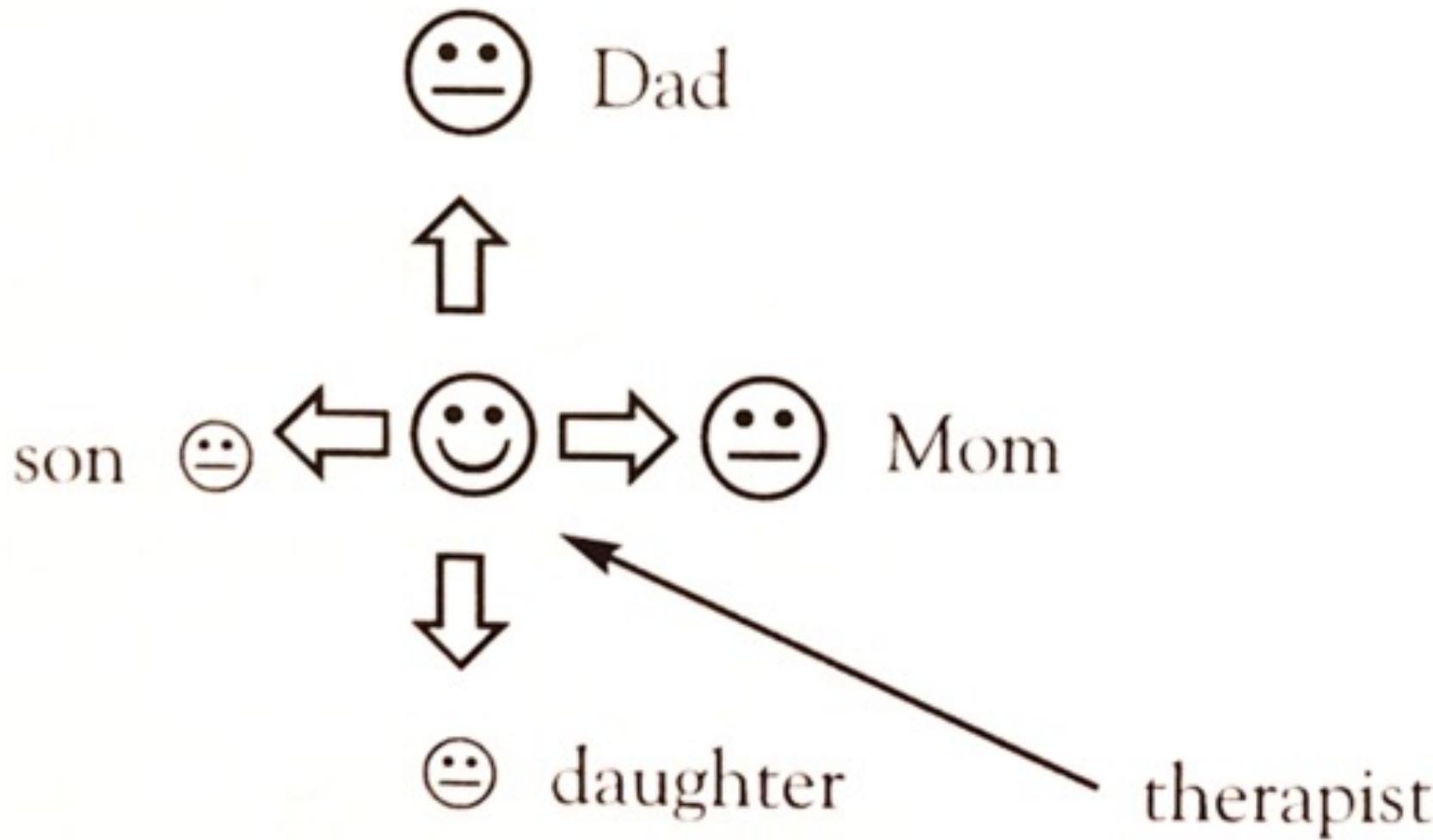


the parents

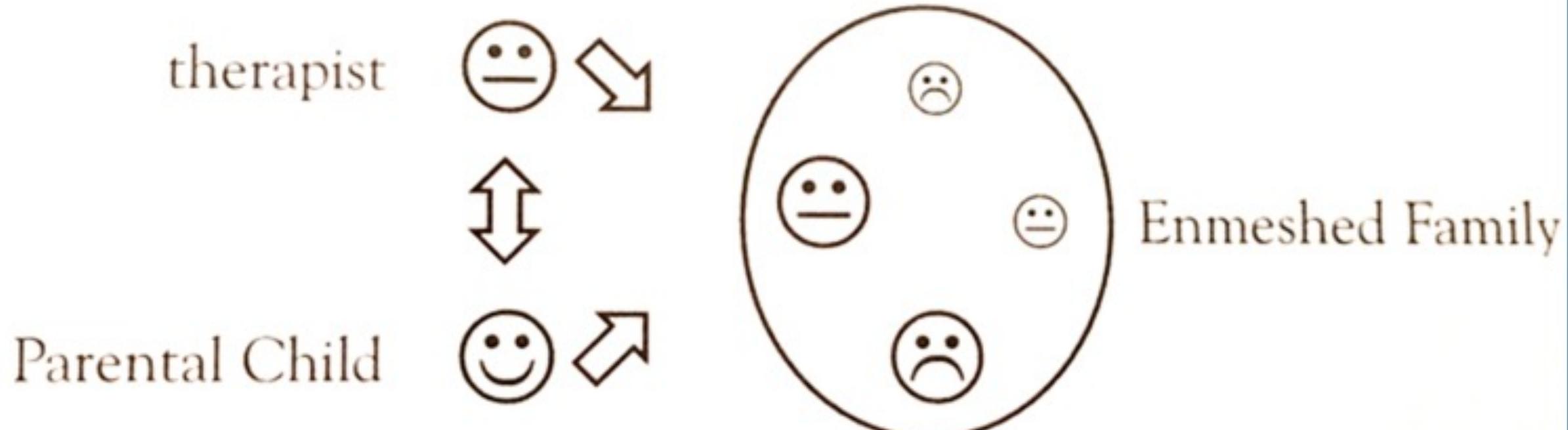
“Filling a Void”



“Therapist Glue”



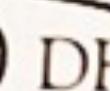
“Alignment with Parental Child”

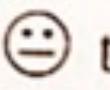


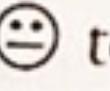
“The Siege of Services”

Mom   therapist

probation
officer   Dad

young son   DFS
social worker

 Juvenile Services
 teen son (Identified Patient)

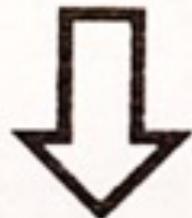
 teen daughter

 Hospital Adolescent Program

“The Wounded Couple”

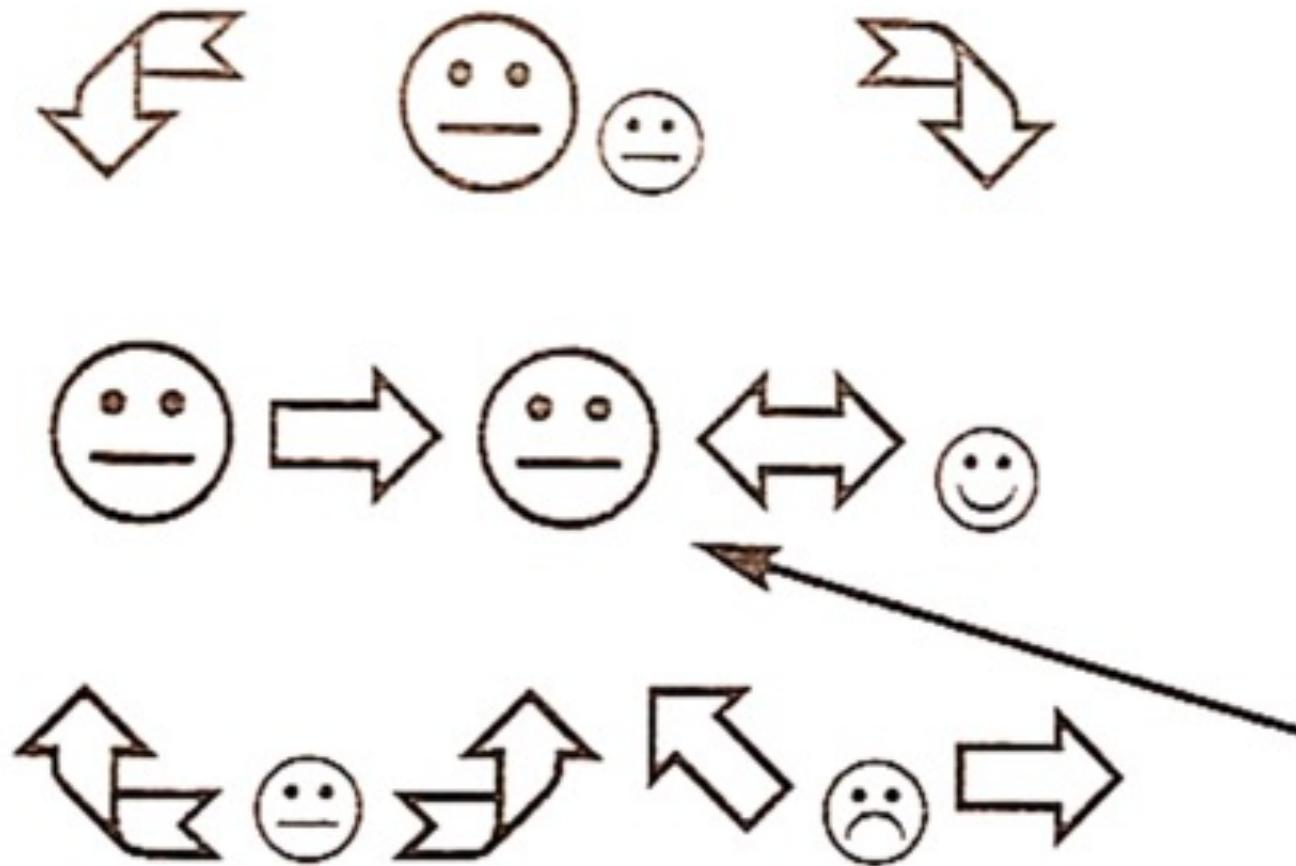


therapist (parental role)



parents (child-like role)

“Traffic Cop in the Woods”



therapi