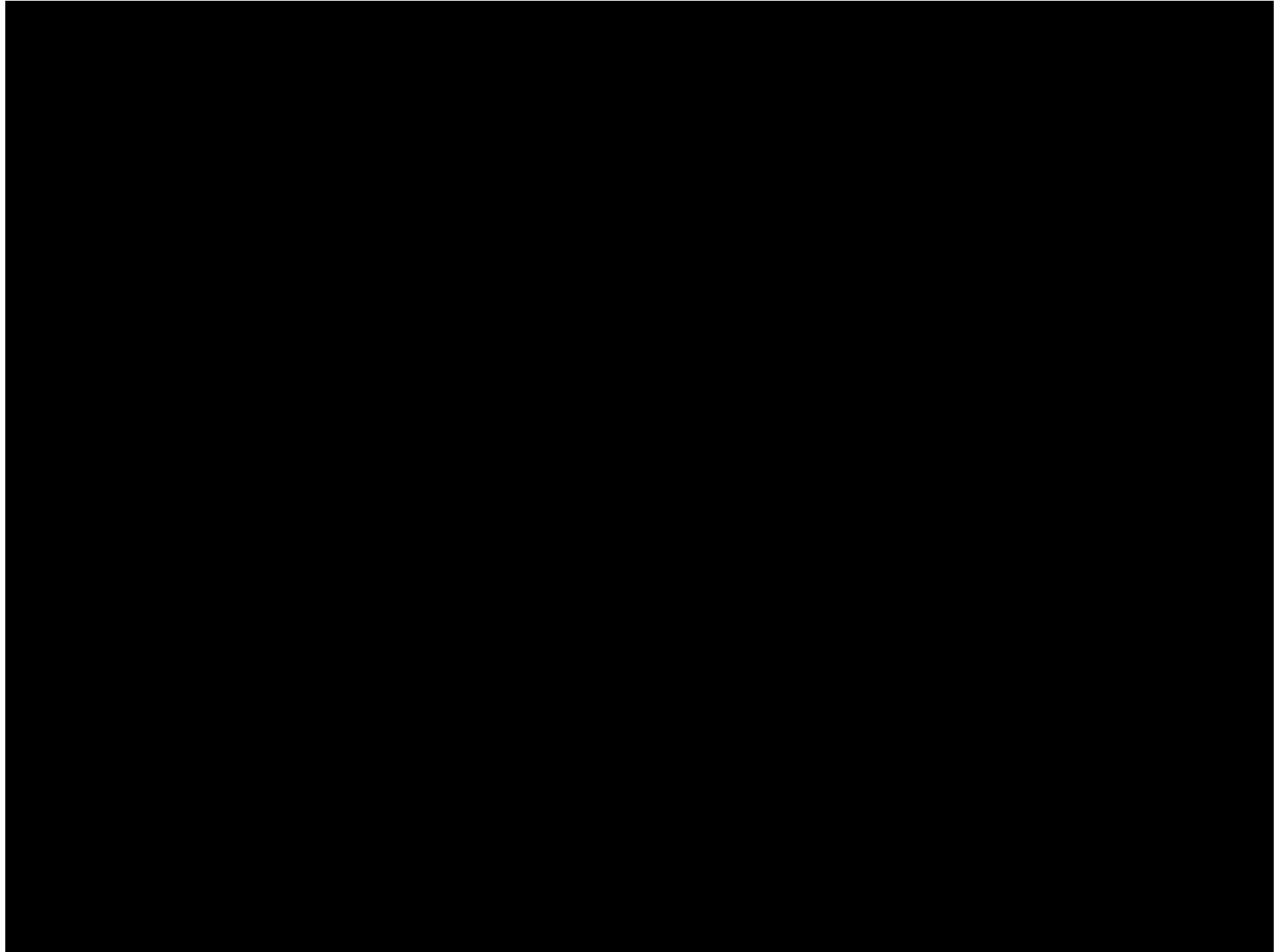




# **Challenging the Critical Inner Voice**

**Further Applications to  
Psychotherapy and Counseling**

with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



Kip from S & L 7.37



# Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- ❖ The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- ❖ The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**





# Separation Theory

- Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought
- Two kinds of emotional pain
  - Interpersonal
  - Existential
- The core conflict
- Formation of defenses in childhood
- Defended versus undefended lifestyles
- Examples of Critical Inner Voices that predispose alienation from self and others



# Definition of the Voice Process

## **Voice Process:**

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, and most importantly, our personal and intimate relationships.





# **Identifying Your Critical Inner Voice**

- **Recognize the Events That Trigger Your Critical Inner Voice**
- **Recognize the Specific Outside Criticisms That Support Your Critical Inner Voice**
- **Become Aware of Times You May Be Projecting Your Self-Attacks onto Other People**
- **Notice Changes in Your Mood**



# Case Conceptualization

## I. Initial Evaluation of Individual

### A. Strengths (Describe)

- Physical Appearance
- Level of Psychological functioning
- Emotional functioning
- Social functioning
- Vocational functioning
- General physical health
- Ego functioning (i.e. ability to maintain an integrated sense of self)



# Case Conceptualization

## I. Initial Evaluation of Individual

### A. Strengths (Describe)

- Ability to cope with anxiety
- Personal approach to existential issues
- Acceptance of and ability to experience feelings (How cut off from feeling or defended against feelings)
- Primary defenses against feeling
- Primary defenses used to maintain distance from others or to maintain image





# Case Conceptualization

## B. Points of Originality and Identity

- Special interests and desires
- Desires and wants: how does the client attempt to fulfill his or her wants? (e.g., directly asking for what he or she wants, or through more indirect names)
- Personal goals (i.e. “I want to be more self-assured,” “I want to be more open to new experiences.”)
- Relationship Goals (i.e. “I want to be in a close interpersonal relationship,” “I want to be able to get along better with my child.”)



# Case Conceptualization

## C. Self-Parenting System

- Creates fantasy bond with others (i.e. gives up interests and independence in trying to merge with another person, keeps up the façade of the “happy family” while the real relating deteriorates.)



# Case Conceptualization

Manifested through:

- Use of substances
- Habit patterns and routines
- Style of working



# Case Conceptualization

- D. Manifestations of Parental Versus Child-Like Mode of Relating (i.e. which role do they play in their primary relationships?)
- E. Dysfunctional Personality Traits (Negative, unpleasant, or toxic qualities)
- F. Negative Thoughts and Attitudes
  - ☐ Intensity of anger associated with negative thoughts
  - ☐ Which type of predominates: Self-attacks or hostile attitudes toward others?
  - ☐ Main areas of self-attacks



# Case Conceptualization

- G. Primary Abuses Suffered During Childhood
- ☐ Sexual abuse
  - ☐ Physical abuse or neglect
  - ☐ Emotional abuse or neglect
  - ☐ Witnessing domestic violence
  - ☐ Growing up in a violent community



# Case Conceptualization

- H. Losses Prior to Age 18 through Death of Parent, Sibling, Relative, or through Divorce or Separation
- I. Goals
  - ☐ What does the client wish to accomplish or achieve through therapy?
  - ☐ What unique attributes in the client do you wish to support and enhance?
  - ☐ Can the client identify anything that gives his or her life meaning and/or purpose?



# Firestone Assessment of Self-Destructive Thoughts

	Never	Rarely	Once In A While	Frequently	Most Of The Time
1. <b>Just stay in the background.</b>	0	1	2	3	4
2. <b>Get them to leave you alone. You don't need them.</b>	0	1	2	3	4
3. <b>You'll save money by staying home. Why do you need to go out anyway?</b>	0	1	2	3	4
4. <b>You better take something so you can relax with those people tonight.</b>	0	1	2	3	4
5. <b>Don't buy that new outfit. Look at all the money you are saving.</b>	0	1	2	3	4



# Continuum of Negative Thought Patterns

Thoughts that lead to low-self-esteem or inwardness (self-defeating thoughts):

## Levels of Increasing Suicidal Intention

1. Self-depreciating thoughts of everyday life
2. Thoughts rationalizing self-denial; thoughts discouraging the person from engaging in pleasurable activities
- 3 Cynical attitudes towards others, leading to alienation and distancing

## Content of Voice Statements

- ↔ *You're incompetent, stupid. You're not very attractive. You're going to make a fool of yourself.*
- ↔ *You're too young (old) and inexperienced to apply for this job. You're too shy to make any new friends. Why go on this trip? It'll be such a hassle. You'll save money by staying home.*
- ↔ *Why go out with her/him? She's cold, unreliable; she'll reject you. She wouldn't go out with you anyway. You can't trust men/women.*





# Continuum of Negative Thought Patterns

Thoughts that lead to low-self-esteem or inwardness (self-defeating thoughts):

## Levels of Increasing Suicidal Intention

- 4. Thoughts influencing isolation; rationalizations for time alone, but using time to become more negative toward oneself ↔
- 5. Self-contempt; vicious self-abusive thoughts and accusations (accompanied by intense angry affect) ↔

## Content of Voice Statements

*Just be by yourself. You're miserable company anyway; who'd want to be with you? Just stay in the background, out of view.*

*You idiot! You bitch! You creep! You stupid shit! You don't deserve anything; you're worthless.*



# Continuum of Negative Thought Patterns

Thoughts that support the cycle of addiction (addictions):

## Levels of Increasing Suicidal Intention

6. Thoughts urging use of substances or food followed by self-criticisms (weakens inhibitions against self-destructive actions, while increasing guilt and self-recrimination following acting out).

## Content of Voice Statements

*It's okay to do drugs, you'll be more relaxed. Go ahead and have a drink, you deserve it. (Later) You weak-willed jerk! You're nothing but a drugged-out drunken freak.*





# Continuum of Negative Thought Patterns

Thoughts that lead to suicide (self-annihilating thoughts):

## Levels of Increasing Suicidal Intention

Thoughts contributing to a sense of hopelessness urging withdrawal or removal of oneself completely from the lives of people closest.

8. Thoughts influencing a person to give up priorities and favored activities (points of identity).

9. Injunctions to inflict self-harm at an action level; intense rage against self.

## Content of Voice Statements

*See how bad you make your family (friends) feel. They'd be better off without you. It's the only decent thing to do; just stay away and stop bothering them.*

*What's the use? Your work doesn't matter any more. Why bother even trying? Nothing matters anyway.*

*Why don't you just drive across the center divider? Just shove your hand under that power saw!*





# Continuum of Negative Thought Patterns

Thoughts that lead to suicide (self-annihilating thoughts):

## Levels of Increasing Suicidal Intention

## Content of Voice Statements

10. Thoughts planning details of suicide (calm, rational, often obsessive, indicating complete loss of feeling for the self).



*You have to get hold of some pills, then go to a hotel, etc.*

11. Injunctions to carry out suicide plans; thoughts baiting the person to commit suicide (extreme thought constriction).



*You've thought about this long enough. Just get it over with. It's the only way out.*



# FAVT: Adult Version ©

## Instructions

All people experience thoughts or *inner voices* that are critical and sometimes destructive towards themselves and others. For example when a person feels angry or hurt, he (she) might think to himself (herself): “*You’ve got to get even, Let them have it.*” When a person is worried about his (her) job, he (she) might say to himself (herself): “*They don’t see that you are working hard, they’re just taking advantage of you.*”

Negative thoughts or inner voices are a part of everyone's day to day thinking. The following is a list of thoughts — voices that people may experience. Please read through each one and indicate, by circling the number that matches how frequently you experience this thought or voice.

## Example:

Rarely  
Almost Never   Sometimes   Frequently  
Almost Always

***You've got to get even, let them have it.***

**1**

**2**

**3**

		Rarely Almost Never	Sometimes	Frequently Almost Always
1.	Nobody understands you.	1	2	3
2.	You idiot! You were faithful to him (her). Now look at what he’s (she’s) done and everybody knows.	1	2	3
3.	How can he (she) talk to you like that.	1	2	3



# **Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)**

## **Level 1: Paranoid/ Suspicious**

**“They are out to get you”**

**You can never trust a woman (man).**

**You can't trust anyone.**

**Keep those immigrants out. They don't deserve anything.**



# **Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)**

## **Level 2: Persecuted Misfit**

**“They are going to make a fool of you”**

**How can they talk to you like that?**

**Nobody sees how much you contribute. No one appreciates you. So just forget them!**

**They’re just doing this to make you get upset.**



# **Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)**

## **Level 3: Self-Depreciating/Pseudo-Independent**

**“You have to take care of yourself”**

**Nobody understands you.**

**You idiot! You were faithful to him (her). Now look at what he’s (she’s) done and everybody knows.**

**They shouldn’t have done that to you. They knew better.**





# **Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)**

## **Level 4: Overtly Aggressive**

**“Violence is the ticket”**

**Look at all these people here that you could hurt and blow away.**

**You’re somebody if you have a gun. You have control. You get respect.**

**Sometimes it feels so good just to explode.**



# **Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)**

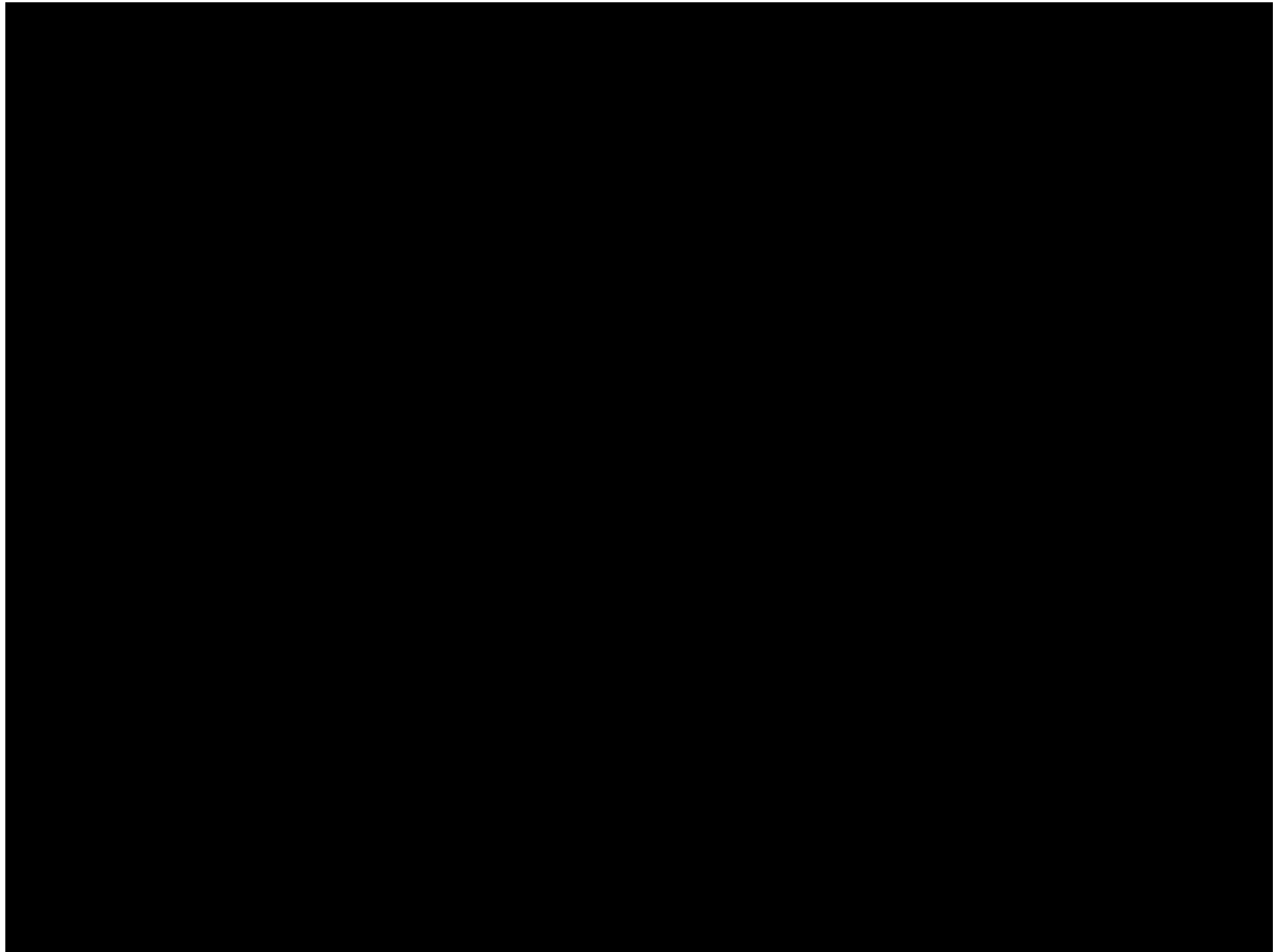
## **Level 5: Self-Aggrandizing**

**“You are #1”**

**You deserve better than this!**

**You can do anything you set your mind to.**

**You’re strong. You don’t really need them in your life.**



Tam and Lara 5.41



## ***Exercise 2.2: The Firestone Voice Scale for Shame and Guilt***

**Circle the frequency with which you experience the  
following critical inner voices:**

0 = Never      1 = Rarely      2 = Once in a While  
3 = Frequently      4 = Most of the Time

Example, you think or say to yourself:    0   1   2   3   **4**   You're so stupid.

0   1   2   3   4   When people get to know you better, they'll see how terrible  
you really are.

0   1   2   3   4   You had another car accident? You're such a klutz!

0   1   2   3   4   Look at all the problems you cause.

0   1   2   3   4   No one wants to hear what you have to say. You should just  
keep your opinions to yourself.



## ***Exercise 2.3: Shame and Guilt: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You***

- **My critical inner voices  
that cause shame and guilt**

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- **My realistic view of myself**

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## ***Exercise 2.4: The Firestone Voice Scale for Vanity***

**Circle the frequency with which you experience the  
following critical inner voices:**

0 = Never      1 = Rarely      2 = Once in a While  
3 = Frequently      4 = Most of the Time

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | You're much smarter and have a lot more going for you than your friends.        |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | You can accomplish anything! Nothing is too hard for you.                       |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | You have so much talent! Someday people will appreciate what you have to offer. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | You know how to cope better than other people. Nothing ever gets you down.      |



## ***Exercise 2.5: How Your Parents Saw You/ How You See Yourself***

### **■ How my parents saw me**

Abilities:

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Qualities:

---

Talents:

---

Special Interests:

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### **■ How I see Myself**

Abilities:

---

Qualities:

---

Talents:

---

Special Interests:

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## ***Exercise 2.6: Realistic or Imaginary Limitations?***

- Physical limitations
- Negative personality characteristics
- Obstacles to attaining my short-term goals
- Obstacles to attaining my long-term goals
- List the limitations or obstacles that I believe are influenced by the critical inner voice





# Withholding

What does it look like?

- Holding back positive qualities
- Feeling victimized or consumed by others





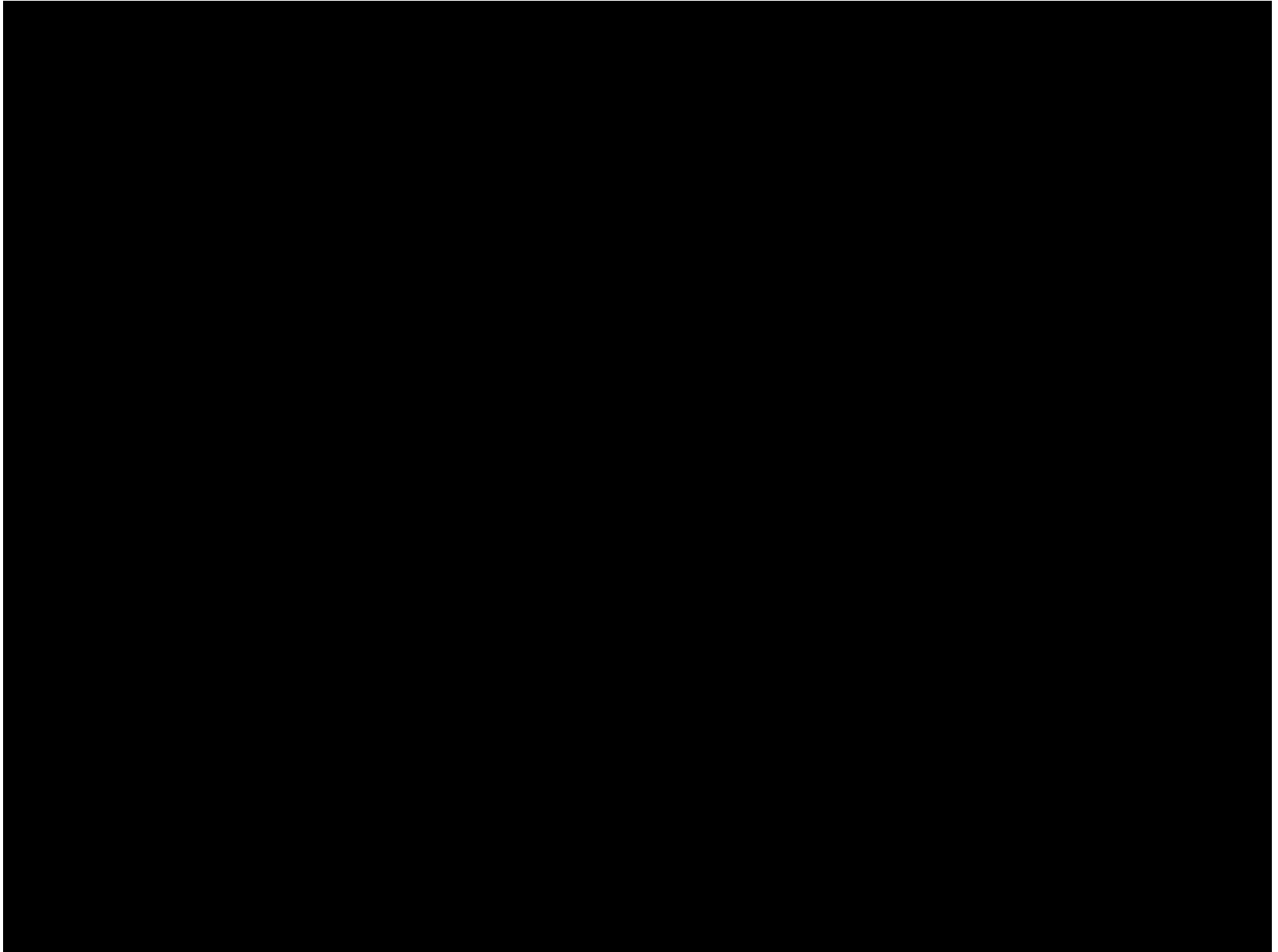
## ***Exercise 3.2: Withholding Behaviors: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You***

■ **Withholding  
behaviors**

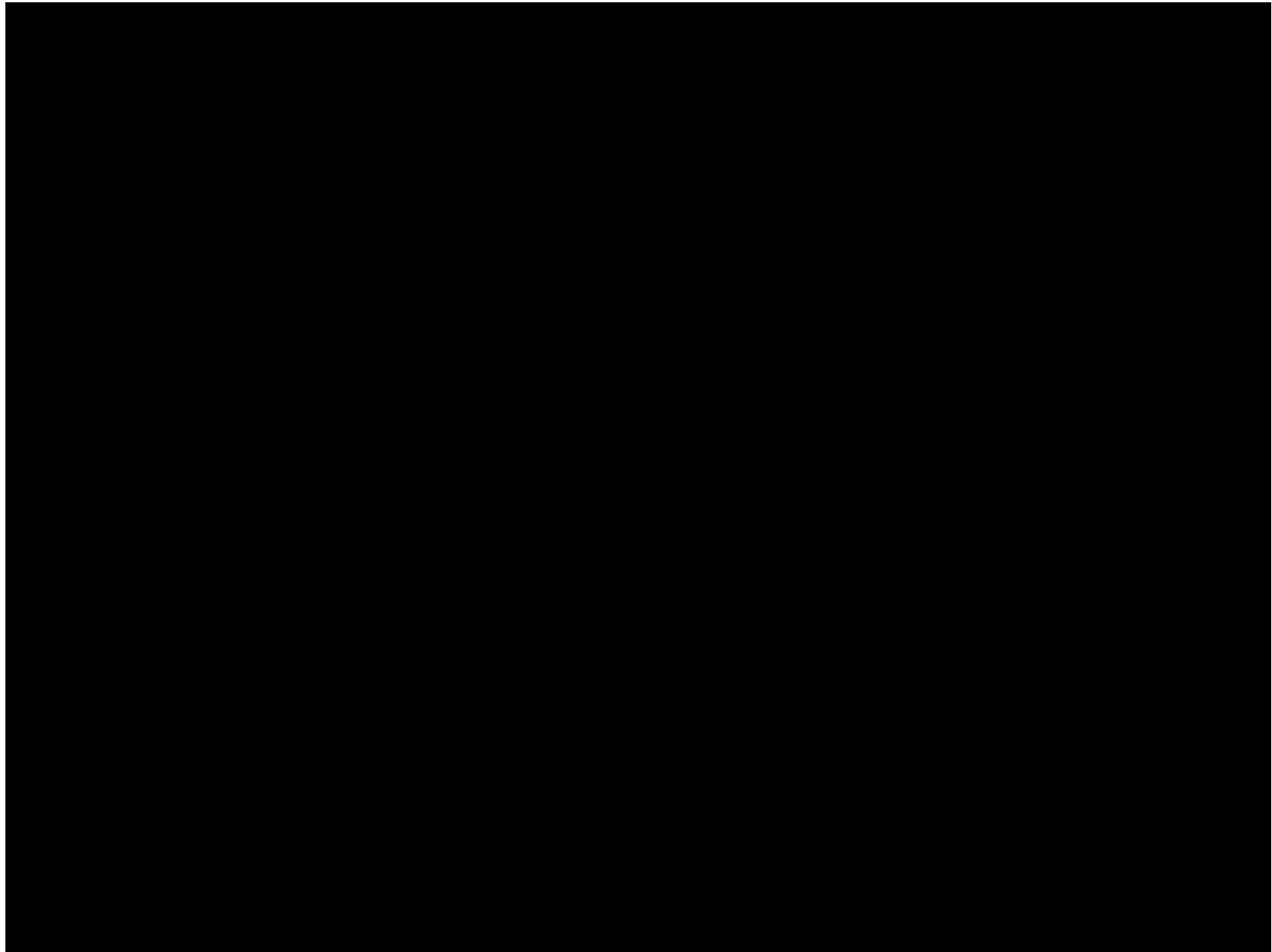
■ **What my critical  
inner voice says**

■ **My realistic  
thoughts**

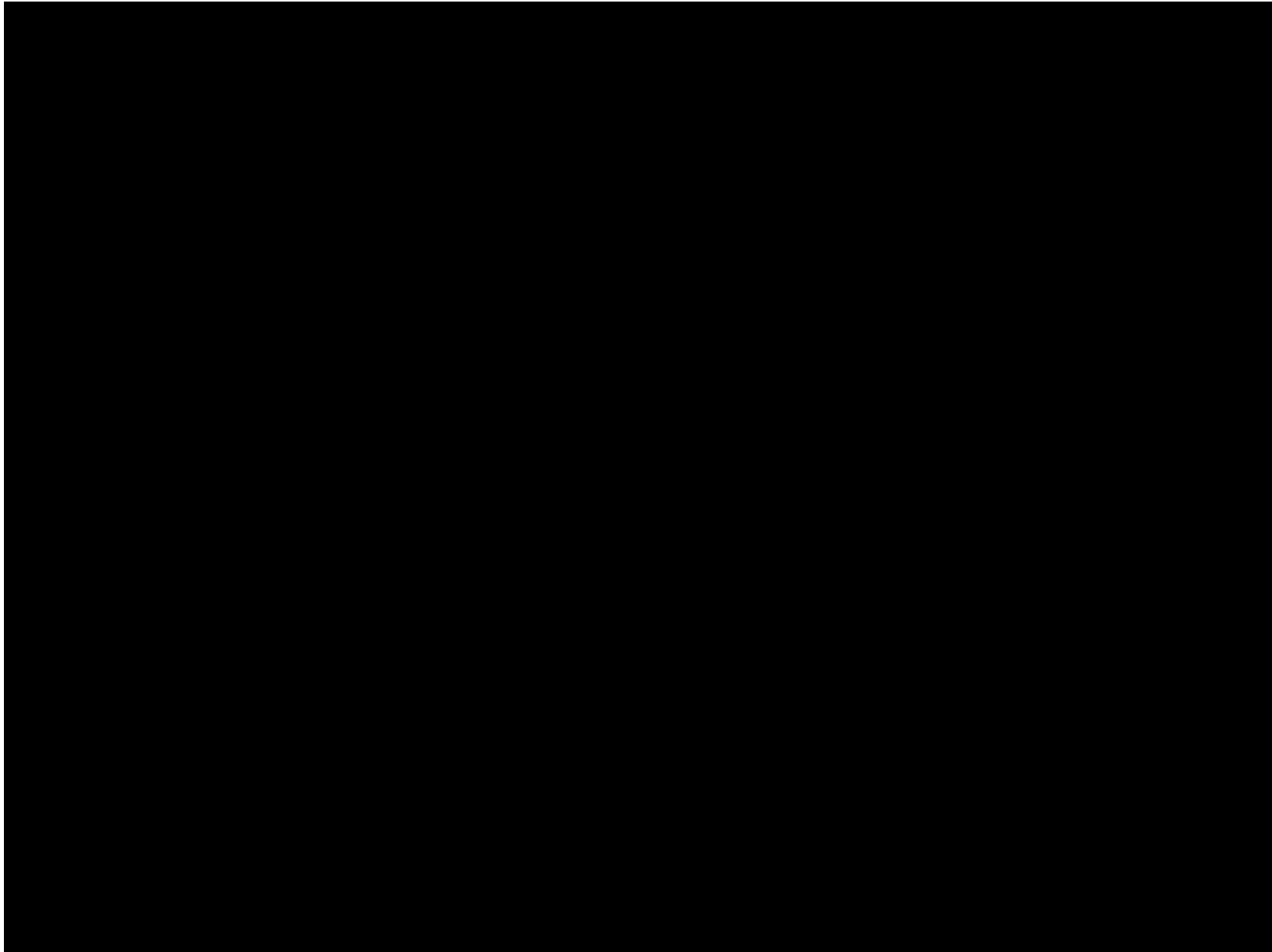
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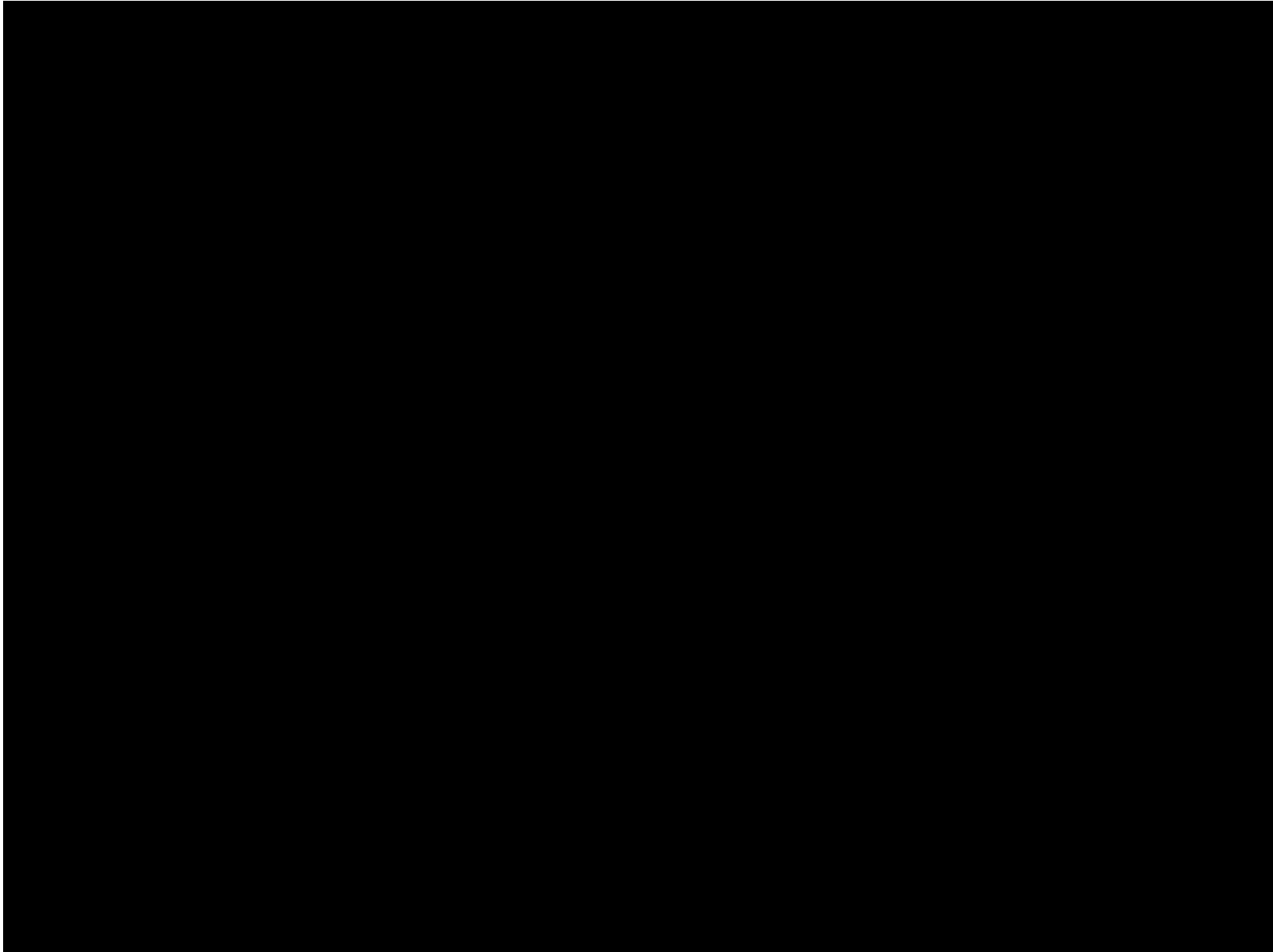
Tamara 2.01



Sonya 2 parts 5.30



Cognitions Susan, Trish & Kevin 5.57





# ***Exercise 4.1: The Firestone Voice Scale for Couples***

**Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:**

0 = Never      1 = Rarely      2 = Once in a While  
3 = Frequently      4 = Most of the Time

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | It's a man's job to take care of a woman.   |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | You're never going to find another person who understands you.  |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Men are so insensitive. They're so opinionated. They don't want you to have your own views about anything . |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Don't get too hooked on him (her).  |



## ***Exercise 4.3: Your Partner in Your Relationship: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You***

- What my critical inner voice says about my partner in my relationship

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- What I realistically think about my partner in my relationship

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## ***Exercise 4.4: Relationships: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You***

- What my critical inner voice  
says about relationships

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- What I realistically think  
about relationships

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## ***Exercise 4.5: Goals for Your Relationship***

- Goals I have for my relationship
- Actions to take to achieve my goals



# Couple Interactions Chart

## Interactions in an Ideal Relationship

Nondefensiveness and openness

Honesty and integrity

Respect for the other's boundaries, priorities and goals, separate from self

Physical affection and personal sexuality

Understanding--lack of distortion of the other

Noncontrolling, nonmanipulative, and nonthreatening

## Interactions in a Relationship Characterized by a Fantasy Bond

Angry reactions to feedback.  
Closed to new experiences.

Deception and duplicity

Overstepping boundaries.  
Other seen only in relation to self

Lack of affection; inadequate or impersonal, routine sexuality

Misunderstanding--distortion of the other

Manipulations of dominance and submission



# Behavioral Checklist for Partners

Describe yourself and your partner along these dimensions on a scale of 1 to 5:

1. Does not describe me/does not describe partner at this time.
2. Describes me on infrequent occasions/describes partner on infrequent occasions.
3. Describes how I am some of the time/describes how my partner is some of the time.
4. Describes how I frequently am/describes how my partner frequently is.
5. Describes me most or all of the time/describes my partner most or all of the time.

non-defensive and open (able to listen to feedback without overreacting/open to new experiences):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

respect for other's boundaries:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

vulnerable (willing to feel sad, acknowledge hurt feelings, etc.):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

honest (straightforward, non-deceptive):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

physically affectionate:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

sexuality (satisfied with sexual relationship):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

empathic and understanding (lack of distortion of the other):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

communication (sense of shared meaning, feel understood):

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

non-controlling, non-manipulative, and non-threatening:

Self: 1 2 3 4 5 / Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

How would you rate yourself along these dimensions?

sense of well-being:

1 2 3 4 5

self-confidence:

1 2 3 4 5

optimism:

1 2 3 4 5



# Behavioral Checklist for Therapists

Describe each partner along these dimensions on a scale of 1 to 5:

1. Does not describe this person at this time.
2. Describes me on infrequent occasions/describes partner on infrequent occasions.
3. Describes how this person is some of the time.
4. Describes how this person frequently is.
5. Describes this person most or all of the time.

non-defensive and open (able to listen to feedback without overreacting/open to new experiences):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

respect for other's boundaries:

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 vulnerable

(willing to feel sad, acknowledge hurt feelings, etc.):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

honest (straightforward, non-deceptive):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

physically affectionate:

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 sexuality

(satisfied with sexual relationship):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 empathic and

understanding (lack of distortion of the other):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 communication

(sense of shared meaning, feel understood):

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

non-controlling, non-manipulative, and non-threatening:

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

sense of well-being:

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

self-confidence:

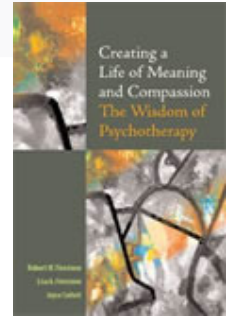
First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5

optimism:

First Partner: 1 2 3 4 5 <sup>45</sup> / Second Partner: 1 2 3 4 5



# **Don't Play the Victim Be An Active Participant in Your Life**



- Assume responsibility for your life
- Give up victimized language and thinking
- Avoid the use of passive aggression to get what you want





# Taking power in your relationship

What you do just before that



The thing your partner does that bothers you the most





## ***Exercise 6.3: Triggers for Using Substances***

■ **Triggering events  
or circumstances**

■ **My critical inner  
voices**

■ **My realistic point  
of view**

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## ***Exercise 6.4: Going After What You Want***

■ **Personal wants  
and desires**

■ **My critical inner  
voices**

■ **My realistic point  
of view**

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# ***Exercise 7.1: Depression and Life Events: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You***

- | <b>■ Triggering event</b> | <b>■ Critical inner voices I recall experiencing at the time of the event</b> | <b>■ My realistic thoughts about the event <i>now</i></b> |
|---------------------------|---|---|
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## ***Exercise 7.3: You and the Continuum of Self-Destructive Thoughts***

- **My critical inner voices**

***Level 1:*** *Thoughts that lead to low self-esteem and self-defeating behaviors*

---

***Level 2:*** *Thoughts that support the cycle of addiction*

---

***Level 3:*** *Thoughts that lead to seriously self-destructive behavior*

---

- **Behaviors I engage in**

***Level 1:***

---

***Level 2:***

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***Level 3:***

---



## ***Exercise 7.10: Plan of Pleasurable Activities***

- **Describe the activities I plan to engage in**

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- **A weekly report of my critical inner voices about my plan What I realistically think**

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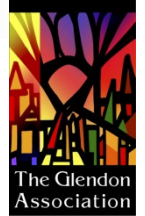
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# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy



## Step I

Identify the content of the person's negative thought process. The person is taught to articulate his or her self-attacks in the second person. The person is encouraged to say the attack as he or she hears it or experiences it. If the person is holding back feelings, he or she is encouraged to express them.



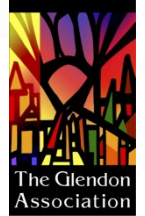
## Step II

The person discusses insights and reactions to verbalizing the voice. The person attempts to understand the relationship between voice attacks and early life experience.





# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy



## Step III

The person answers back to the voice attacks, which is often a cathartic experience. Afterwards, it is important for the person to make a rational statement about how he or she really is, how other people really are, what is true about his or her social world.



## Step IV

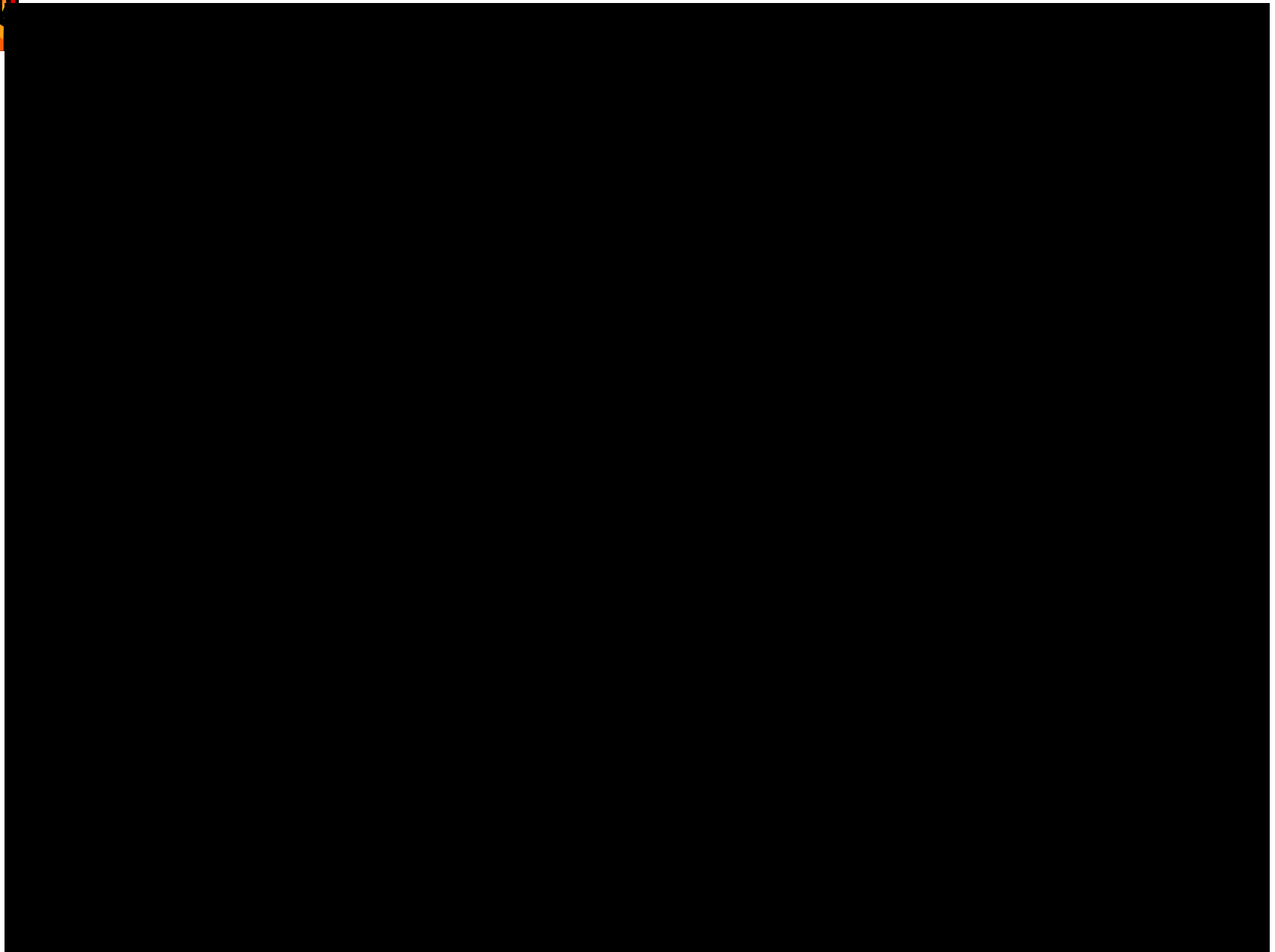
The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.

## Step V

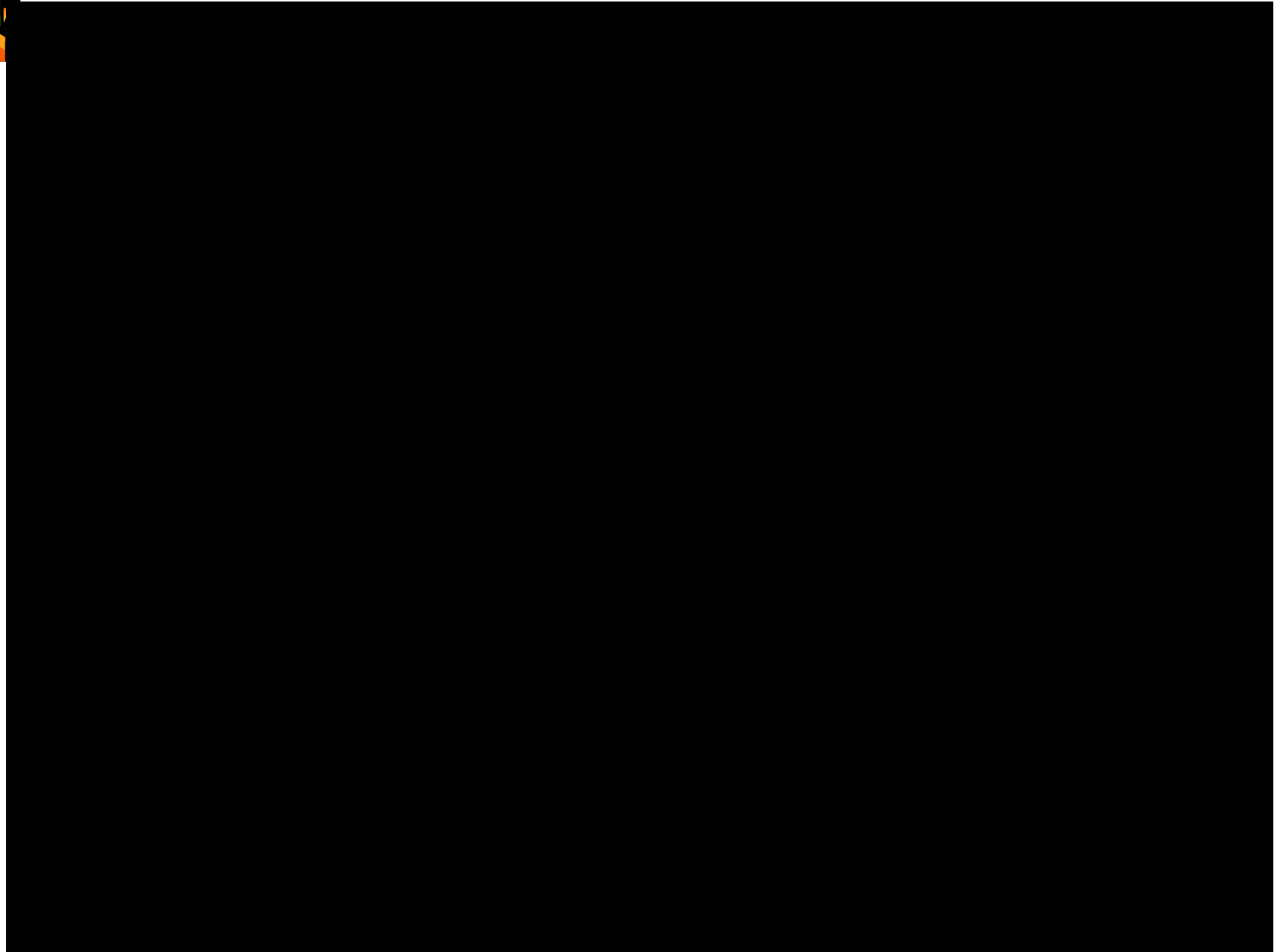
The person then collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors. The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behavior dictated by his or her negative thoughts and to also increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.



If you are interested in attending a voice therapy training or in getting training materials please contact [jina@glendon.org](mailto:jina@glendon.org) or visit [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org).

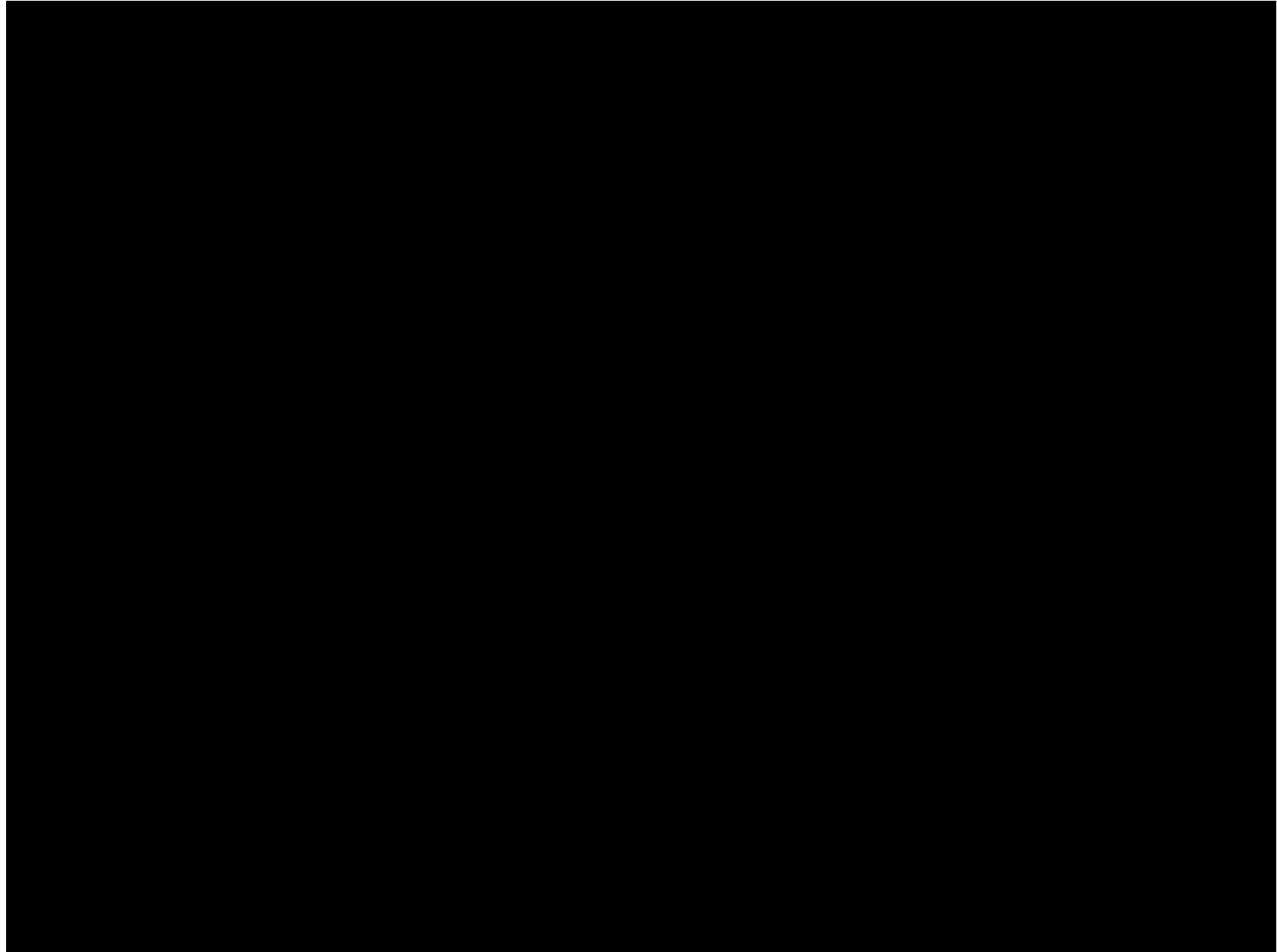


Deryl and Sherise 7.41



Naomi VT 7.43





Sonya VT 11.34



# Therapeutic Stance

1. Ability to experience deep feelings and to respond appropriately to client's expression of powerful emotions.
2. Capacity for being fully present in the session.
3. Ability to provide a secure base for client – i.e. to stay attuned to client's communications and to offer contingent responses.



# Therapeutic Stance

4. Ability to repair empathic failures or ruptures that occur in the therapeutic alliance.
5. Self-knowledge – in particular, an understanding of one's own trigger points.
6. A posture of inquiry as contrasted with one of judgment – not trying to fit the client into a particular theory.



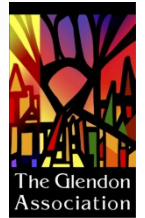
# Therapeutic Stance

7. A posture of equality as contrasted with playing a superior role in relation to the client.
8. Consistency, stability and refusal to become alienated from the client.
9. Non-intrusiveness – acknowledgement of basic worth of client.

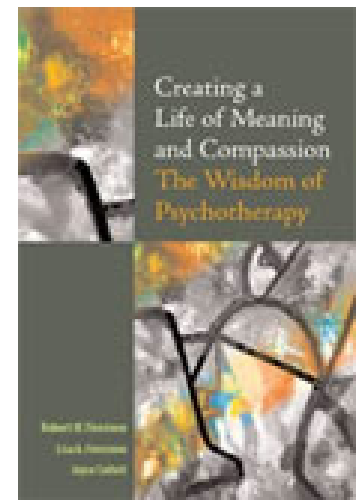
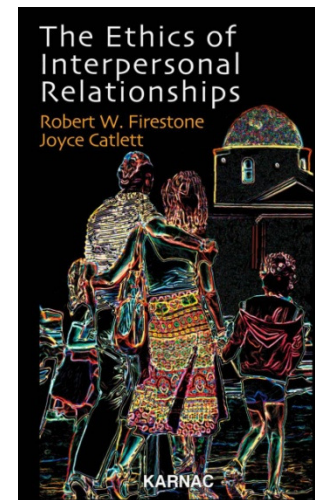
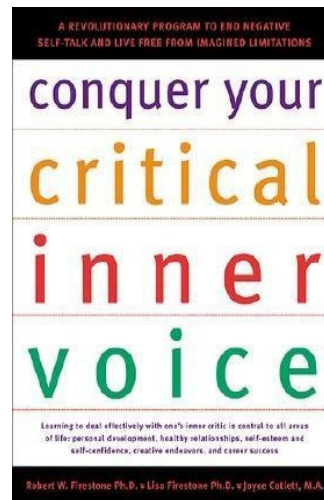
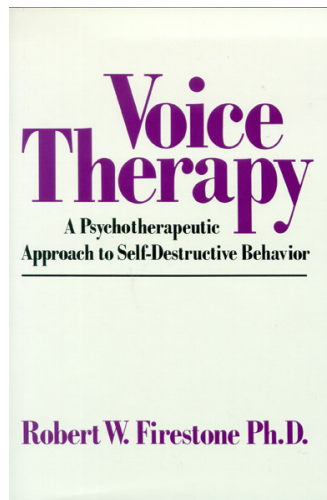
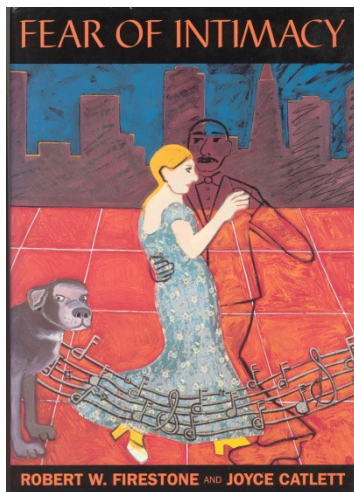


# Therapeutic Stance

10. Complete acceptance of client as he or she is while providing information about the ways that he or she may be limiting him/herself.
11. Implicit validation of client's sexuality and gender orientation.



# Resources: Books



Visit [www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org) for resource links



# Upcoming Webinars:

## **CE Webinars for Professionals:**

With Dan Siegel, May 24, 1.5 CE hours

With Pat Love, August 9, 1.5 CE hours

## **Free Webinar for the Public:**

Understanding and Preventing Violence, April 5, 11:00AM PST

With Dan Siegel, June 14, 11:00AM PST

With Pat Love, September 13, 11:00AM PST

All upcoming webinars can be found at [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)



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# Archived Webinars

## **Archived CE Webinars:**

1. Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice: An Adjunct to Clinical Practice (2 CEs \$25)
2. Helping Parents to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children (2 CEs \$25)
3. Overcoming the Fear of Intimacy (2 CEs, \$25)

## **Archived Free Webinars for the Public:**

1. Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice
2. How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children
3. Reflections on a New Year: How to Become Your Best Self

All webinars can be found at [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)



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# Contact Information

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