

TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO FILE:

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BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

THERAPIST: Well, what's happening?

CLIENT: I don't know where to begin. So probably best place is present moment, which is just trying to figure out where I'm at present moment-wise, which is probably going to the course or the session. Where I'm at this morning is Lieutenant Dans (ph) strapped to the mast of the boat raging against the storm.

THERAPIST: [Laughs] Why?

CLIENT: That's where I'm at.

THERAPIST: It's a good thing that I get the movie reference because whenever, I find whenever I use movie reference in classes all of mine are from the 90s and the 80s so that's pretty I got that one. That's my genre.

CLIENT: I mean it's like there's nothing more raw than Lieutenant Dans (ph) screaming at the storm, so. Yes, and I'm remembering a sentence from a few sessions back, how would I know you're angry? Well I'm not sure that I'm in this place physically showing it but it's palpable. [00:01:12]

THERAPIST: I can see it. What's been happening?

CLIENT: Why don't you take me, if you can, can you take me back to where we last, our last session?

THERAPIST: Yes. Well we were talking a lot, I mean you kind of surprisingly told me that you had a discussion with your wife and you talked a bit about being unhappy. And she acknowledged that but then it was kind of dropped. I also remember that she had an opportunity to continue the conversation when you went to go see your kid at Indiana University, right? And she chose to drive with a friend instead and so I think that's where we were.

CLIENT: Yes. Okay. Yes, so that weekend, that weekend I went to see the kids, so I had an opportunity to see my son Harry in Maroa. And he had a conference; I stayed over with him. Lovely, lovely evening. Went out to dinner or went out to breakfast. Went out to dinner when my daughter came over. So we, I had an opportunity to connect with all the kids. [00:02:20]

THERAPIST: And was it just you?

CLIENT: It was just me because my wife was at this conference with her friend and then we all converged at Indiana University Sunday afternoon. My son was in a show. I didn't know the show. The show was A Little Night Music.

THERAPIST: Okay, I'm not familiar and I'm a musical I love musicals.

CLIENT: Yes, me too, and I said here's a Steven Sondheim I've never seen.

THERAPIST: Interesting. Okay.

CLIENT: So it's where the song "Send In the Clowns" comes from. Okay, and it's all about these love triangles of people in unhappy marriages and mistresses and here's my son playing me on stage. And I said, oh God, this is really oh the irony here is too thick for me to even sit in.

THERAPIST: Tell me about it.

CLIENT: [Laughs] Yes, I don't know if there's much more to tell other than that but hearing "Send In the Clowns" will never sound the same again. So it's just like [00:03:34]

THERAPIST: It's like a punch to the gut.

CLIENT: Yes, yes. And then yes. So then it's recognizing the lid is just coming off of the pressure cooker. Another image that I have is I am, I don't know it's terribly unpleasant, but just vomiting up emotion and it's so the best that I can be is restrained but I've recognized that I've been having these physical reactions. I can feel it. It's like being with the sensations of the body and [00:04:27]

THERAPIST: What physical reactions are you having?

CLIENT: Just a lot of tension. I recognize the closer I drive to going home it's just this buildup of tension. It's just such a, yes, a visceral feeling. So give me a second to try to pull it together but I'm trying to remember a series of events. So that was that weekend. I think that, I'm just going to throw stuff out there. At this point it just feels like [laughing] no movie reference but just this visual of I got these puzzle pieces and I'm just throwing them on the table like I don't know what. [00:05:32]

So there's this sense of okay, it's not unreasonable to want to have a relationship with emotional and physical intimacy. This is crazy, and there's just all this anger just kind of building up and -

THERAPIST: It's all the anger you've been holding back for a long time.

CLIENT: Oh my God, decades. And it's probably anger that predates my marriage. I don't know. And then, yes I don't know if I can really remember if there were other significant events of that week. But the weekend for Christmas this year we've decided not to buy gifts. We ended up buying a season subscription to Broadway on Detroit. So we got tickets and we ended up going to the first one of those shows on Sunday night. And we ended up going to dinner ahead of time and I was just in this place of kind of now, kind of this, but we're in this public place and it doesn't take a brain surgeon to know that there's something wrong. So she's asking me so what's going on. And I say, recognizing that I'm trying to jump back into those old patterns of, I'm not saying the words but they're right there, nothing's wrong; I'm fine. But I'm not going there so I'm just sitting with it and there's maybe some awkward silence but I was finally, and again I'm not going to be able to give this verbatim or anything like that, but I was able in probably choppy sentences and language able to get out expressing just all this anger that I'm feeling about [00:08:00]

And again I wish I had my recorder so that I could've gone back and replayed what was it that you were really able to say. But I know that words, probably like the bullet point that you could've used for the 6:00 news, was that I was able to say I'm in a three-person relationship and I'm the odd man out. And I did say seven or eight years ago you hauled down the flag from the flagship and you transferred it to Lisa's house and you've left me here with nothing.

THERAPIST: That's amazing and very powerful.

CLIENT: And, so I know that that was kind of like where, I may recall other things that I was able to say, but for me it was like okay. And at the point that I was saying it, there was I don't remember this sense of being out of control. It was more a sense of there was almost just calm

determination. I'm saying this. I just kind of leaned into it a little bit and it was okay and as a matter of fact it was like wow. [00:09:24]

THERAPIST: Wow is right.

CLIENT: You know, the anticipation of saying that was far worse than saying it.

THERAPIST: So what not only enabled you to do that but what enabled you to do that and then what reaction did you get?

CLIENT: What enabled me I think just the work that we've been doing, pushing the canoe (ph), sitting with this, I think coming to some kind of resolve but I don't know when that happened. But I got to this point and I remember saying it out loud, dammit, I'm going to get intimacy back into my life. And this is not an unreasonable thing for me to want. And so I've got to do something; I've got to take some action to make this happen. And recognizing that sitting on my emotions and being dishonest with myself is not going to get me there. [00:10:29]

THERAPIST: What reaction did you get?

CLIENT: I think initially there was the sense of, because there was some talk about kind of where this is coming from but it's kind of like the process I'm talking about, that through work that I'm doing with individual counseling and stuff like that. There was this sense of like oh I'm really so happy for you that you're doing this and it'll be not that those were the words but the essence was it'll be so great when you finally get all fixed and come back and everything will be hunky-dory. And it was just like, that was like throwing gasoline on the fire. And I said -

THERAPIST: Oh yes, sure. That made it much worse; I can see that. [00:11:14]

CLIENT: Oh my God.

THERAPIST: Yes, well it's patronizing. You go do your job and you just get that fixed with your little counseling program over there and when you're all fixed come back and we'll go back to the way we were.

CLIENT: Right. And it's just, I recognize that just kind of enflamed the torch or the fire. And then I also recognized that the other kicker in that was that whenever we talk about intimacy -

THERAPIST: You and she?

CLIENT: Yes, it's like we're not talking the same language. And she's says, she's starting to get a little defensive and the tears are welling up and that kind of thing and she says but all of the things that I do for you to show you how much I care; my love and affection for you and all of the intimacy that I give you, you're just not there for that. I said well tell me what that looks like because I believe that that's what you're trying to do but I don't know what that looks like. And she says well I give you a kiss in the morning on my way out the door and I tell you I love you. And it just came out of my mouth and I said yes, but you know what that looks like to me? That's just a reminder of all the things that I don't have in my life. It's just like, well that was probably not the most sensitive thing to say at moment but it was [00:12:56]

THERAPIST: It was deeply honest.

CLIENT: I get a peck on the cheek and that's it.

THERAPIST: Right. And Lisa gets the emotional intimacy that you're missing.

CLIENT: Yes. And then it was kind of I recognized that that was as far as she could go at that moment and she kind of went into this place of and it was also time for us to move to the show. But then it became mindless conversation about this and that and she was fiddling on the phone and looking at Facebook and telling me about this and that. I was just like before that though, I was saying that we were talking about physical intimacy. So that conversation then spilled into whenever we're talking about intimacy it's automatically it's about sexual intimacy. And I said you're not hearing me, you're not hearing me. And I get it, I get that her fear of sexual intimacy is so deep that that's but she started talking about our sexual intimacy in terms of past tense, as in completely past tense. [00:14:32]

THERAPIST: Give me some verbiage.

CLIENT: We had a really wonderful sexual intimacy in our life; we have three wonderful kids. Not necessarily that she said these words but that's over now and I can't go there anymore. And it's kind of like, it sort of happened at that moment but the stone that kind of got pushed over there it took a while before that started to roll into an avalanche and it just like wow, okay that's been my experience for the last seven years but that's never been stated. That's never been stated like yes, this is completely over. [00:15:28]

THERAPIST: And how did you react to her sentence?

CLIENT: I had this image that I'm the guy that's been sitting at the railway station for the last seven years waiting for the train to show up. And I said dude, what a dumb ass. This train is not even coming back and you're still sitting at the chain, at the station.

THERAPIST: You sat at the station for some very good reasons.

CLIENT: Yes, I get that but I mean that's where the anger is at. And this morning it was, I don't know.

THERAPIST: Go ahead.

CLIENT: Well, I'm just trying to decide if that's the chain of events.

THERAPIST: Even out of sequence, it's okay.

CLIENT: So I get the fact that all of this emotion is out there and I know it's got to be scaring the living bejesus out of her because I'm shifting paradigms in a pretty big way and I recognize that that may not have been my intention. I didn't want to hit the plunger but there you go. I put the nuclear option on the table. [00:16:40]

And again, where did this conversation fit into it? I'm not 100% sure but I was able to say you know what, I need physical and emotional intimacy in my life and I'm no longer willing to live without it.

THERAPIST: Good for you.

CLIENT: And that was a conversation that happened around the kitchen table maybe yesterday or the day before, I'm not sure. I don't know. It all started to, and I recognized it this emotional rage or whatever that I'm in right now, I'm just puking up junk and I'm sorry. [00:17:11]

THERAPIST: Emotional honesty, it's not junk Seamus.

CLIENT: Yes, I know.

THERAPIST: It's not junk. It's the truth that's always been there that she has ignored because it was convenient and you've been trying to ignore so you didn't have to have the conversation. So although I imagine it's a deeply painful space, it's a cathartic space because this is all the stuff that you've been holding in. And it's in some ways it's unfair that you're the one who has to hold it and she lives from the benefits of your holding it. And you shouldn't have to hold it anymore because you're not asking for anything unreasonable.

CLIENT: Well I can't, I can't and it's coming out. And I get that that's painful for me and her and everybody else. It's just like -

THERAPIST: But it needed to happen.

CLIENT: but I'm done. At some point, I don't know why, but it was just and I have kind of shut out music a lot in my life over the past seven years and I don't know why.

THERAPIST: No, you know why. [00:18:15]

CLIENT: Well, I shut down everything.

THERAPIST: Well not only that but you guys met around music, music is what sometimes pulls her away from you. I mean I -

CLIENT: Okay. You know what? Okay.

THERAPIST: Yes, I mean, and so, and whenever you are forced to connect, it's forced to connect instead of wanting it's around music or her concerts or her deciding what you're going to do. So I get it.

CLIENT: And music is of course touches the emotional cores, so why the hell put yourself there? Whether it's classical music or country music or whatever. I fired up an old Johnny Cash the last Johnny Cash album. He did a cover of Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down." And I just like playing that. And then it bumps up against his cover of Nine Inch Nails "Hurt," which is just so incredibly raw that I'm like okay I'm not sure even I can go here today. [00:19:21]

THERAPIST: So you said to her I'm not going to put up with this anymore and how, what did she, how did she respond to that?

CLIENT: Oh, yes, and again whether this is all out of and it doesn't matter. I mean this is how memory works. This is why you can ask nine different people what happened at the scene of an accident and you going to get nine different explanations. But at some point something well you know what you're asking me. You're asking me to choose to go someplace where I can't go or you're leaving. And I didn't all I said were those words and that was her interpretation of that. [00:20:18]

THERAPIST: Did you take any of that kind of guilt-inducing statement into yourself because that's not actually what I'm hearing that you said. That may be what she heard. You're stating your own needs and she's received it, yes.

CLIENT: You know, I think that was the really amazing part in all of this. All I can feel is anger; I'm not feeling the guilt.

THERAPIST: Okay. Good, good.

CLIENT: Yes, I get that you're hurting and I know what that would've done to me in the past and I'm not backing down. And I know that there's going to be the onslaught. I mean this is a fucking fireswamp. I mean this is just going to be, this is just going to be and I get it. This is

karma; this is the path that you set up a long time ago. Intentionally, unintentionally it doesn't make any difference. It's all the damn dominoes that you've set up. You can't talk about your feelings; you can't do this. It's 27 years of this so here's what happens. Here's what happens after 27 years of setting up those dominoes. [00:21:27]

THERAPIST: Well, okay but this is a two-person issue.

CLIENT: Oh I know but I'm going to take responsibility for me.

THERAPIST: Sure, but you're not yes and my guess is there were times in the marriage you did try to talk about your feelings and you were shut down and maybe her as well. That's usually what happens. Somebody teaches you how receptive they are to what you think and feel but you're not able to do that anymore and you're not asking anything unreasonable at all. Physical and emotional intimacy, that's one of the reasons why people get married and have romantic relationships in the first place, those two things. [00:22:04]

So this isn't anything that's unreasonable. It's a game changer, right, because you're married kind of in name only, and she's okay with that because she's getting her emotional needs met elsewhere but you're not okay with it any more. I mean I'm very proud of you even though I recognize that it's a deeply painful experience. But it almost needed to happen because you're not good at not being honest with you.

CLIENT: I'm not good at being honest with me?

THERAPIST: You're not good at not being honest with you. You can do it but -

CLIENT: I think I've been doing it for a long time.

THERAPIST: Yes, but it's taken its toll. Yes, and what you're asking the compliment that's missed is I want to be close to you. That's not what she heard but in some ways -

CLIENT: But I don't yes, you know what? I don't think that's there.

THERAPIST: Well I, and I hear what you're saying but the idea that I want intimacy and this is your expectation I don't know if you guys can do that or have that given all of the damage that's been done. I don't know that you can't have it but I don't know and I don't know if that's what you're seeking from her but stating that expectation there's still an inherent compliment and it is this is what I've been looking for; this is what I need. [00:23:29]

CLIENT: Yes, and if anything the only thing that I can hold onto right now is that I can say that to me. I can say that to me and it's okay. Another event that happened is, in sharing some of this with a friend, there was this image that came back to me in some work that I have done a long time ago in terms of like the inner child kind of thing. And this is back when I was doing my Masters in Religious Education. I did a pro-golf journaling class. So you're doing this imagery stuff and you're going back and revisiting past hurts and that kind of thing. [00:24:24]

But this image this friend had talked about this dream where she rescued this child from this real seedy hotel. She knew that there was this child in there someplace and that she went in and rescued this child. And that seemed like a really powerful image with me. I just kind of sat with that for a while and I kind of envisioned the seedy hotel and I'm walking down this hallway. And at the end of the hallway I opened the door and I'm in the front yard of my childhood home. And I find myself, the five-year-old self who's kind of hiding in the bushes. [00:25:22]

And I remember this scene but it was this hiding from a couple of neighborhood boys who were laughing at me at the time, and I don't even remember why but that was what was going on. And I had had this vision or have worked with this image before and it was always like you would go and talk to the child and tell the child it was okay, whatever it was, blah, blah, blah. And this time it was no talking. It was just like I grabbed up this five-year-old image of myself and it's been a hugely powerful thing because he hasn't left me. [00:26:02]

THERAPIST: Tell me what the image means to you.

CLIENT: The image is just this deep sense of giving myself some love, just like cradling those parts of me.

THERAPIST: I can see that it's painful for you. Can you tell me what you're feeling right now as you're telling me about it?

CLIENT: That sense of all those years of not being able to do that. All those years of this little child who's just been alone and hurt or whatever. Whatever that is.

THERAPIST: Having to hide, even.

CLIENT: Yes, and can't speak and interestingly enough there's a mask. I'm wearing The Lone Ranger mask and a little cowboy hat.

THERAPIST: The five-year-old?

CLIENT: Yes, this five-year-old and I got rid of all that stuff. You don't need to have this on.

THERAPIST: So you saved you, comforted you, hugged you. [00:27:05]

CLIENT: Yes. So I do meditation in the morning and I got this meditation bench. So the posture that I have is you're kneeling on the floor on this bench and this little five-year-old is just right from me and it's just, it's a really powerful imagery right now so that's really -

THERAPIST: It's almost like, and pardon my interpretation if it's not correct, but it's almost like I'm kind of walking with you through this image but I imagine for the first time in being honest about your feelings not only do you validate them but you comforted yourself. So in some ways you provided the intimacy that you needed because you believe that your feelings are true, honest and valid. And before you had been dismissing them.

CLIENT: Yes. And I really do feel like there's a sense of commitment to that, there's a sense of power to that, there's a sense of I know there's been no way that I can go back to whatever that was. So that's been a powerful game changer for me. Sitting in on Matt Englar-Carlson's workshop [00:28:33]

THERAPIST: How did that go?

CLIENT: It was good. The thing that I brought out of that was working with men is working with that deep sense of shame. And some pieces started to fall together there.

THERAPIST: Tell me about the pieces.

CLIENT: My issue of having this mild deformity in my penis or my penis is this huge shame that has been the major definitive kind of thing that's going on in my life and recognizing the power of that shame. My God. [00:29:17]

THERAPIST: Well it's almost like you've been multiply shamed in multiple areas. So the penis is the symbol of manhood; that for you is a source of shame. Men, I was just having this conversation with my husband and this is what makes me crazy about our society, how we tell boys don't feel, man up, be a man, which I think are the most destructive messages you can give another human. Don't feel and if you feel you're weak or vulnerable. And on so many levels you've been told don't be. Don't be, don't be you, don't feel. And in some ways that's not even who you are. And so undoing all those damaging messages takes a long time. [00:30:00]

CLIENT: Yes, so I'm really trying to be patient with myself because, yes.

THERAPIST: Well damn, I mean you've some amazing work in a short amount of time. It's painful work but for -

CLIENT: Well I'm not running away from it, I'm not backing down from it.

THERAPIST: No you're not.

CLIENT: I get it, this is really hugely watershed stuff and it's -

THERAPIST: It can either be painful ending or a new beginning or both.

CLIENT: Yes. It is already both and I just don't know what that new beginning is. But whatever was ended a long time ago and it's just a recognition that that was over. Now, whatever comes out of that I don't know. At this point today, I'm still lashed to the mast and I'm screaming. There ain't no love and there ain't no compassion. And until that tempest dies down, there's going to be no reasoning with this right now. [00:31:18]

THERAPIST: What's it go ahead, sorry.

CLIENT: No, I was just going to say, yes it was yesterday because we had the snow yesterday, that I was in this place. And she was home from school, I was trying to get some work done and then it was so we had this conversation talking about trying to go down that road of talking about intimacy and recognizing that we are talking two complete different languages. And I recognized in just sitting there just trying to not get into counselor mode but really just trying to deeply listen to what she was saying I feel and hear that she is so completely petrified of moving down the road of [00:32:23]

THERAPIST: Physical intimacy?

CLIENT: Yes. That there's just and she's just screaming against that and yelling at me.

THERAPIST: Yelling at you physically?

CLIENT: Oh yes. I can't go there. And what if I had some other kind of thing like if I was in a car accident and I was a quadriplegic and would you stop loving me then too? And I get, you know, I get that this is a very real thing for her. And she says fine if intimacy is, if that's so important to you then just go find somebody and have yourself a good lay and then so she's just yelling [00:33:07]

THERAPIST: And then? And then what?

CLIENT: Yes, I don't know. And be happy or something. She can't understand. She can't hear what I'm saying.

THERAPIST: Sure because she's coming from her own place of fear. But again it's unfortunate that she's not hearing what you're saying because for her it's about you're going to ask me to do something I don't want to do. And what? It's certainly not unreasonable that married people



have sex regardless of whatever age across the lifespan.

CLIENT: You would think though it would be.

THERAPIST: Yes, but it's most married couples have sex.

CLIENT: Well not according to her.

THERAPIST: Well but research shows differently.

CLIENT: Her research, however -

THERAPIST: Yes, but she's not able to hear the emotional intimate piece. Physical intimacy is an outgrowth of the emotional intimacy typically in a marriage, right?

CLIENT: Right.

THERAPIST: What was it like for you to kind of say these things to her and then get yelled at or not be heard? [00:34:16]

CLIENT: You know, I think again it was just pouring more gasoline on the fire.

THERAPIST: Yes, I almost hear that your needs were diminished. Like, if you just want sex you go out and find it's not just sex and sex is actually pretty important.

CLIENT: She can't hear that. She's never been able to hear that and I get that now. I get that probably all the way back to the beginning of our relationship but that's not the way the relationship started. Which is so completely confusing because she was the one that initiated everything in the beginning and I -

THERAPIST: Sexually? [00:35:01]

CLIENT: Yes, and so that was so all the sudden we got this completely upside down relationship.

THERAPIST: How do you think that having sort of the physical deformity and her cutting off sex seven years ago -

CLIENT: Oh that was huge.

THERAPIST: Yes, how do you think those things kind of have impacted you?

CLIENT: Well it confirmed my worst fears that I wasn't loveable.

THERAPIST: Even though that's not true?

CLIENT: Oh of course. And even though that wasn't what she was saying. All of that aside, deep down inside the story that I was really listening to was that and that happened prior to seven years ago. That happened -

THERAPIST: Sure. Are you familiar with narrative therapy at all?

CLIENT: Yes.

THERAPIST: You've changed your narrative.

CLIENT: Oh I know.

THERAPIST: We're in an alternate story here. You changed the dominant narrative. [00:36:04]

CLIENT: Well tell me what you're hearing.

THERAPIST: Yes. Well the dominant narrative is what we've been looking at this whole time, all these messages of inadequacy, these messages about your worth and keeping your feelings. But you as of last week or two weeks ago now just changed the narrative completely. Like I don't want that any more. We have been talking about the old scripts and how they weren't true and how you're this kind of really talented man who can pick up and do all three careers and do them well and how you're sort of a very deeply feeling man even though that has been told, you have been told that's not okay. And you got rid of that negative narrative. It's brought you to a painful place but a very honest place and a place where so I'm hearing her kind of saying these things and diminishing your needs, but I'm also hearing that you did not take that in and say you know you're right, maybe I should but you would have. That's how we know that the narrative has changed. You would have gone okay, you're right; maybe I shouldn't want sex, which is insane. It's insane. [00:37:17]

CLIENT: Yes, it's insane and that's what I did for a long time.

THERAPIST: Well the insane part is if your expectations were unreasonable. But they're not unreasonable; they're normal healthy expectations for a marriage.

CLIENT: Yes, I can see if my only expression of sex was sadomasochism.

THERAPIST: Sure, exactly. Exactly. And I mean yes, it's her own terror and things like this. I get that and have a lot of experience working with individuals of sexual abuse. I get that. But the fact that it's a surprise that you need these things is troubling.

CLIENT: It's not a surprise.

THERAPIST: No, she's surprised that you are saying you need these things.

CLIENT: Maybe not I mean this has always been an issue and she's always, it's always been this kind of thing like you can't just love me for who I am; you got to have sex.

THERAPIST: Okay. Can you take me back then before the kind of seven-year absence period, past the beginning part of the relationship. You had three kids; you've had to have sex to have three kids.

CLIENT: All three times.

THERAPIST: Yes, at least three times. But so how was this what was being conveyed in your marriage let's say 15 years ago sexually about sex?

CLIENT: Same story. Same story. I'm not sure at what point the honeymoon ended; it didn't last long. And when I'm sure after the kids. It's kind of like this sense of okay I got three kids; we're done.

THERAPIST: So sex was always an issue? [00:38:54]

CLIENT: Yes, I don't know. And I don't know it's difficult to go back but it's been a very long time.

THERAPIST: And always the message was you always want sex, you always want sex.

CLIENT: Can't you just love me for who I am?

THERAPIST: Wow. That's a pretty loaded message. You know what it says? You're not supposed to want this from me. What's wrong with you that you want me to have sex? You're depraved or whatever, which is completely not the case. [00:39:25]

CLIENT: But that's the but that was the relationship and just over time, over time it eventually got to the place where we couldn't have sex at home any more. So sex was relegated to maybe three or four times a year by going away for the weekend.

THERAPIST: And then was it awkward or was it always initiated by you?

CLIENT: Oh it was pretty much always initiated by me. And we had gotten to the point that the only way you were going to have sex is if you had two or three drinks beforehand. So you had to get in this self-medicated state before you could go there. [00:40:05]

THERAPIST: And how was sex after the medicated state?

CLIENT: Perfunctory probably. Not satisfying. Whatever. Yes, you just kind of recognize that this is, this is just ugly, ugly to pull all of this garbage out. But yes, I think I got to that point that -

THERAPIST: Well no wonder you stopped having sex. If you get told that something's wrong with you basically or why can't you just love me for who I am, pretty soon you're like it's not worth it.

CLIENT: Well I think, yes, I think between that and for at least 10 years she's had these premenopausal migraines. So I mean if it's not a headache, or working or the kids or whatever, A, there's no time and it's like wow, there's just no time, there's no time. And then [00:41:09]

THERAPIST: You know what I wonder? Sorry to interrupt you. It's almost like, and obviously I don't know your wife, but it's almost like you know what the real fear might be about for her? Finding out there's something wrong with her.

CLIENT: Oh yes, I know that.

THERAPIST: Yes, right, and so -

CLIENT: Because there's nothing wrong with her.

THERAPIST: Yes. Well so instead I say there's something wrong with you, there's something wrong with your expectation, but deep down I wonder because I don't know. I think it's pretty common knowledge or maybe because I teach the human sexuality class but most married couples have sex around once a week. Younger married couples have sex more; middle-aged couples usually have sex about one time a week. This is not anything that's unexpected, out of the norm. It's really not. And so I wonder if the fear is you're asking me to give you something I can't give you, I'm not capable of. What's wrong with me? So it's just a lot easier to say what's wrong with you that you even want this? [00:42:16]

Well of course you would. I mean it's a healthy need, absolutely normal, nothing wrong with it. It's the expectation that you would be having sex with your wife. But this of course sex is the smallest piece of this. This is not about sex. Sex is just a way to communicate emotional intimacy.

CLIENT: Right, and this, and the conversation always gets derailed around this. We end up talking about this and it's like okay, we're missing the point. Missing the point completely.

THERAPIST: And if you could tell her right now what the point is in a sentence, what would be your point? What would you want her to know?

CLIENT: That you got some serious hurts and you're going to need to get them fixed. And there's no hope for intimacy until you can fix that. And, I don't know.

THERAPIST: How would you define intimacy to her?

CLIENT: Intimacy is the ability to be completely vulnerable to another person. And right now I know that I can't go there. I've never been able to go there with her because there's been such a huge part of her that's been walled off. And I recognize that I can't bring my vulnerability to that because it's like okay well I'm going to be completely open and vulnerable with you but you don't have to be. [00:43:58]

THERAPIST: But in some ways you did by putting your feelings out there and by being honest even through anger, right? So you go from a place of not expressing your feelings to expressing your true feelings, whatever they are, in some ways you did. I mean that's the amazing part about this. I'm not throwing that word around because I like it. I mean it's amazing what you did after years of feeling stuck and silenced and not being able to do this. [00:44:27]

You were dead honest, unflinchingly, about how you feel and what you want despite the fact that you've been told for so long that that's not okay. Some part of you doesn't believe that and you put it out there making yourself vulnerable. And then refusing to take in any guilt about it or refusing to take in and this was not unkind. This is just really honest refusing to kind of continue in this place of being stuck. You're certainly not stuck any more. [00:45:07]

CLIENT: No. No, and it's like screw it. I'm getting, I'm putting intimacy in my life.

THERAPIST: Well what do you think about this idea being thrown in your face of just go find someone if that's important to you?

CLIENT: You know what? To a certain degree I feel like I made this commitment to myself whatever a week ago, two weeks ago, and I said you know what I already have friends. I already have friends. I have friends that care about me and I think recognize some things about me. Who the hell says I can't have relationships, friendships? I can just explore that.

THERAPIST: She meant sexually, though.

CLIENT: I know she did and I'm not ready to go there.

THERAPIST: No and I'm not suggesting or encouraging you to do that. But I'm saying what do you think about her throwing that at you? What did you do with that piece? [0:46:03]

CLIENT: It made me feel really cheap. It made me feel really angry, like God.

THERAPIST: That's what I was concerned about. It was designed, that comment was designed to minimize your sexual needs and make you feel cheap but it shouldn't. [0:46:29]

CLIENT: I didn't accept it. I mean I felt that and at the time I was in this place of listening to it but I wasn't in a place of reacting. I quickly went to this place of you know what, I can sit here and listen and I can just be in the moment and listen and that's about all I can handle. And I feel like not that I'm tamping down my emotion but I feel like at that point I was just giving her the gift and allowing her to get it out.

THERAPIST: Sure, sure. So where does all of this leave you? It's a lot. [0:47:04]

CLIENT: "Well this morning, and I recognize that for I don't know how many years I showed up faithfully to Wednesday night choir practice and she goes out with the girls every Wednesday night. I know that. I go home after choir practice, I go home and whatever, watch whatever series I'm watching on Netflix or whatever. So last night it was screw this. I'm not

going to go home any more. I'm tired of sitting in front of the goddammed television and wasting my life. So I just asked one of the guys I don't want to go to a bar but how about Starbucks? You want to go to grab a Starbucks?

THERAPIST: Sure. And you did.

CLIENT: And I did.

THERAPIST: Good for you. How did that feel?

CLIENT: It was okay. I recognize, I started listening to Brene Brown, are you familiar with that name?

THERAPIST: No.

CLIENT: Type in Brene Brown, and that's spelled B-R-E-N-E Brown, and she's got some TED (ph) talks on shame and vulnerability and they were hitting me in a hard place. You know, right on kind of stuff. And one of the things, there was a little five-minute segment, when you get to the TED (ph) talk there was a little five minute segment where she's talking with Oprah. You know it was just a little segment of six people you shouldn't share your vulnerability with, people who don't deserve your vulnerability. And I recognized in the midst of this last night going out with this guy it's like yeah, we're not going there. [0:48:57]

THERAPIST: Right, right. Well, and that's okay.

CLIENT: And that's okay.

THERAPIST: You did it to get – yes.

CLIENT: I get it. I said okay, I got to go now.

THERAPIST: What would it be like for you to not go to choir practice anymore? [0:49:04]

CLIENT: Oh that's coming. But so instead of going out with the girls last night she went home. But she didn't tell me she was going home. So I get this text, I'm almost home and I get this text so are you okay, where are you? I came home after choir practice and you weren't here and I just, I could just start to feel it bubbling up.

THERAPIST: It? What it?

CLIENT: Anger, rage and I said this is all about clinging now; this is all about recognizing that I put the God damned nuclear option on the table and now after seven years you're finally going to pay some attention to me. It just, it's just –

THERAPIST: I can see physically. It's like viscerally.

CLIENT: And then I have a routine in the morning. I've had a routine in the morning for years. And this has been spoken about, this is known. I wake up very slowly in the morning and I have a half an hour to 45 minute meditation routine, exercise, and I have to go walk the dog and – I move. I get up very early in the morning because that's my time. And she got up this morning at 5:30 and she's out there making breakfast and –

THERAPIST: Pissed. [0:50:33]

CLIENT: And I'm getting up and I went out and I walked the dog and normally we walk for five minutes. But I just walked and I was so in touch with one other episode where I was that angry and I ended up walking down the country road for about three miles and I wasn't coming back. It was just like – I'm just – and I'm still [0:51:05]

THERAPIST: And do you know why you're so pissed? I mean, I think I get it but do you know why?

CLIENT: This is just all too little too late.

THERAPIST: Yes, well it's faux intimacy. It's like putting a band-aid over a gunshot wound.

CLIENT: Exactly. So then –

THERAPIST: So you're going to make me breakfast now.

CLIENT: And she's saying those words to me. So what I feel is I'm putting all this intimacy out here and you're just pushing me away. And I said I can't just turn it on like a spigot.

THERAPIST: Sure, sure. And it's still another representation of the fact that she doesn't even get what you're asking. [0:51:40]

CLIENT: She doesn't get it.

THERAPIST: Like if I just come home from choir practice and make you breakfast then we'll be okay and we can go back to what we were. But you aren't going back; that's not possible. And it's not about breakfast, right? Maybe a decade ago it might have been about breakfast and talking over breakfast but we're far beyond that point. It's – in some ways I would imagine it minimizes what you feel. [0:52:11]

CLIENT: I was sitting there and I physically felt like I was going to vomit. And I was shaking. I could barely talk. I was able to tell her I'm feeling such anger and rage right now that I can't even function.

THERAPIST: Good for you.

CLIENT: And at that point I just got up and I just, whatever I was doing, I was getting – I recognized I didn't shave; I barely remembered to get my books. I said oh man, I am such a place here this morning I can barely contain it.

THERAPIST: Yes because you can't live with dishonesty anymore and that's dishonest. You cannot live with hypocrisy anymore and there it is looking you in the face.

CLIENT: It's all fucking around and I said – yes, sitting around in choir practice last night I said I am so fucking tired of this. I'm tired of living this lie; I am done. I am done with this shit.

THERAPIST: I hear that.

CLIENT: Done with – so I recognize that this is huge. It's going to be – we're not talking like, I don't know.

THERAPIST: Who else can you talk to about all of these things? [0:53:35]

CLIENT: Well I have one friend and I think at this point we, unfortunately, I don't know, I don't know if it's fortunate or unfortunate, we're both really kind of in the same boat right now.

THERAPIST: Okay, that might not be a bad thing.

CLIENT: But I think we both recognize how needy we are, how, what the needs are for boundaries in this. So I think that we're trying to really work on that but I feel so out of control.

THERAPIST: Very raw right now. [0:54:23]

CLIENT: And I'm just – I don't want to hurt anybody else.

THERAPIST: Seamus I don't think you're going to hurt anybody else. I don't think you need to worry about hurting other people but you might think of other people, even people who you might not have known long, maybe even students in the program who you have a connection with.

CLIENT: You know, I do have a connection with some people and I do feel like I've got people. I've got a network of people here; thank God I've got a network of people here. And a little bit here, a little bit there –

THERAPIST: Use your network.

CLIENT: Yes. And I recognize that there are some professional boundary things that I've got to be really concerned about and that kind of thing.

THERAPIST: Probably less so with some of the students in the program given they're in the same place. You can share a piece with this person and a piece with and that's one of the things I typically find with students in that program. With students who support other students they're typically really good at doing that but you are processing this so you're in the middle of it. Like I said I am really proud of you even though I know that this is a really painful place. But I also know, I mean I want you to think about how much this took out of you. I mean I want you, I guess I want you to know how brave you are. This is an act of bravery because if we went back to, and we can because they're all on tape, earlier sessions even my mentioning the idea of your anger you said I can't go there. Even the idea of thinking about talking to your wife brought up all this anxiety and you just busted through that in such a short amount of time. [0:56:08]

CLIENT: Yes, I know. I know and I guess it's just the way – I don't know. I suppose if I sat and reflected on it I suppose that that's kind of the way I do things.

THERAPIST: Okay, it's been a long time coming.

CLIENT: Like planning and planning to build a house and finally boom, we're going to make it happen. Planning and planning to start your own business and it's like okay this is it. So I suppose that that's the way I do things. I don't know. [0:56:41]

THERAPIST: Well if anything comes up and you need to talk, even though we're on Spring Break next week, if you send me an e-mail I'll call you. And I don't offer it if I don't mean it. So if you say – and it's the best way to get in touch with me because the phone's right there. So if you say can you give me a call I'll say yes, what time do you have, I'll definitely give you a call. That's never a problem. [0:57:05]

CLIENT: Thank you.

THERAPIST: So if you still need to process this or if something happens and you need to kind of explore that please go ahead and again I will say I will never offer that if I don't mean it. So if you e-mail me I will give you a call.

CLIENT: Yes. No it's, yes it's a pretty unfamiliar place.

THERAPIST: Yes. I don't think you have to be afraid of it though.

CLIENT: No, it's just looking at, yes, looking at the consequences of everything.

THERAPIST: I don't know. In some ways I think you've made the decision not to waste another day.

CLIENT: Oh yes, that was definitely set.

THERAPIST: So you're not stuck.

CLIENT: No I'm not stuck.

THERAPIST: You've changed the course of what this could look like for you.

CLIENT: Yes, it's just that, and I've put in motion of getting some names of couples counselors. But –

THERAPIST: I know some good ones so let me know. [0:58:11]

CLIENT: I'll take suggestions but I'm – I remember talking to someone who's this couples counselor. She said yes, I can work with a couple. It's just I ask them up front are you with me on this? And a lot of times I get a lot of resistance. Can you give me at least 25% you're in on this? And I've got nothing; I'm bringing nothing to the table. I'll give you that I will go but there is just absolutely nothing there but today anger and rage and I've got no compassion today. [0:59:07]

THERAPIST: Sure. Well, I – the only person you need compassion for right now is yourself because you have not given you much compassion over the years. So right now, I hope you are most compassionate with yourself.

CLIENT: I can do that even though I'm getting the message of you're being incredibly selfish.

THERAPIST: Yes. I don't see it that way, not that I'm an expert on such things but – I guess if I thought that there was some unreasonable expectation then I'd say let's look at your expectations but I hear very normal, healthy expectations for a marriage; nothing that's not. Nobody's perfect but wanting physical and emotional intimacy from and with your wife, stating that as a need, is absolutely normal.

CLIENT: It does sound pretty ridiculous just to be saying that in this room, doesn't it?

THERAPIST: It doesn't sound ridiculous, but –

CLIENT: It sounds ridiculous that I would be thinking that that would be acceptable.

THERAPIST: Well I think you have been told for so long. So you will give me a call next week if you need to or send me an e-mail and I'll give you a call right back. Please do.

CLIENT: I will. [1:00:21]

THERAPIST: And I'm glad that we were able to get in today for sure. Let me know. Were back to our regular Tuesday time the week after next.

CLIENT: Right, not next week.

THERAPIST: Not next week but the week after next.

CLIENT: Yes. Well she has a three-day thing she's going with the band at the beginning part of next week so –

THERAPIST: So some relief there.

CLIENT: I'll get a little bit of a respite.

THERAPIST: Yes. Don't watch that movie now. [Laughs] No, I don't think you need to see that.

CLIENT: I didn't want to go watch that movie in the first place.



THERAPIST: Yes, well I don't think we need the movie any more.

CLIENT: Yes, and now I'm feeling like what I'm going to be dealing with is this clingy behavior, which is all I'm going to be like -

THERAPIST: Maybe.

CLIENT: enflaming things.

THERAPIST: As long as you are honest in your feelings and in your words, whatever her behavior if you find that objectionable you can say why.

CLIENT: Yes, I suppose I can.

THERAPIST: And so then you will find her behavior less objectionable because you are being honest about why it triggers you so. So as long as you are honest in your feelings and your behavior -

CLIENT: That's true. I've got to stay with that.

THERAPIST: You have to stay with that because then you can be honest about why the clinging is like nails on a chalkboard, why that's not okay. And again I think that's a pretty accurate response, not unreasonable. Okay, take care of yourself.

CLIENT: I will. I can.

THERAPIST: And let me know. Let me know.

CLIENT: And thank you.

THERAPIST: No, it's - I really enjoy working with you Seamus. Think of yourself as brave, incredibly brave.

CLIENT: I think of myself as [inaudible at 1:02:28].

THERAPIST: Yes, for sure. For sure.

CLIENT: You seen the Lego Movie?

THERAPIST: No, the Lego Movie? Is that a modern movie that's out because I am so out of touch with modern movies. Do I need to see that?

CLIENT: I don't know. I'm identifying with this little character who's the main character in the movie.

THERAPIST: Okay. I'll have to look that up. Okay, take care. All right, bye bye.

END TRANSCRIPT