



O V E R V I E W :

E.S. came to see me as she was struggling to face her substance abuse issues and their impact on her capacity for intimacy and emotional presence within her marriage. We also worked on cultivating the skills necessary to have an authentic, rewarding relationship with herself, her husband, and her son.

*I've been to many, many therapists over the past 35 years and I always quit going because it was drudgery to go. I would rack my brains for something to say and I couldn't use the tools that they gave me. I had been an alcoholic for 39 years and I knew that I needed some help as I quit, but I could not bear the thought of going to a regular therapist because I had tried that so many times. My friend highly recommended Doug. He had had lots of health problems and emotional problems and said that Doug was "the guy to go to." Going to see Doug has been a wonderful experience. Therapy with him is effective and fun; I look forward to coming into his office. I always get a whole new outlook on my problems. Instead of just pointing out my problems, Doug also sees my health; he sees through my patterns and pain to the "brilliant sanity" behind them. He's allowed me to know myself better, to appreciate myself better, to love myself more, and to honor myself more. He does it in a way that works for me. Doug is intelligent, he's intuitive, he's sweet; he's just the best therapist in the world ... at least for me.*

T H E D E T A I L S :

REFRAMING AND SUPPORT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

Since I don't specialize in substance abuse issues, I worked in conjunction with AA and her other counselors. My role was helping E.S. reframe her addiction beliefs and to support her with specific skills, tools, and perspectives. Here are a few examples of the work we did:

*Self-orienting:* We worked to develop the skill of having her come into relationship with herself first before she oriented to her addiction, cravings, and impulses. This was a real stretch for E.S.; she had to give herself permission to put herself first.

*Switching AA sponsors:* A lot of healing and growth came from helping E.S. change to a more appropriate sponsor. She had to honor the validity of her own dissatisfaction with her first sponsor. This was a golden opportunity to explore and to change some of her patterns of self-sabotage and self-judgment.

*Replacements for alcohol and drugs:* E.S. liked some of the states she experienced when she was under the influence. We explored other ways of entering altered or heightened states of consciousness such as mindfulness, body centered meditations, music, etc.

*Working during the good times:* E.S. had a belief that she needed to work on changing only when things were going poorly. Over time she came to understand that her times of health and peacefulness were powerful opportunities for her to do her work ... and succeed!

*Working with Doug is fun and, at the same time, I'm able to retain what he tells me. The way he tells it to me, the way he shows me things, the way he helps me to experience my own life and take notice of myself, stays with me so I can actually use it in my life not just in his office.*

#### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

When we started, E.S. was stuck in several dysfunctional systems with her husband of more than 30 years. She was also beginning the process of reconciliation with her estranged son (from an earlier marriage.) Finally, she was trapped in an impossible situation between her son and her husband. These relational challenges caused E.S. a great deal of pain; she was eager for my help. Here are some of the things we did:

***Differentiation and appropriate selfishness:*** E.S. tended to be hyper-responsible. We did a lot of inquiry around “what’s mine and what’s his.” She also needed support and permission around finding and honoring her appropriate selfishness. This dovetailed beautifully with the practice of finding her authentic self first before coming into relationship with something external (see above section).

***Communication skills:*** E.S. found these to be very basic, very powerful, and very effective. Instead of responding with substance abuse, she learned to advocate for herself, own her needs, and ask for them to be met in relationship. We also worked to restore touch and physical intimacy as a communication tool within her primary relationship.

***Boundary skills:*** E.S. learned to draw clear internal boundaries with such things as cigarettes and body image. She also has made great strides at setting and holding clear boundaries with her husband and her son. This helped her escape from being “pickle in the middle” between the two of them and their issues.

*My best friend was really struggling and I told her, “Doug is the guy you need to go see; this is the man who will let you get a different perspective on who you are. You go and see Doug and you’re going to like yourself more and even come to appreciate the parts in your life that you struggle with.” In my case the way that he presented things helped me to understand why I originally needed to start drinking, how that helped me deal with the things that had happened in my childhood, and how I could do that differently at this point in my life.*

E.S. was a pleasure to work with. She asked good questions of me and of herself; she was willing to consider other ways of being and doing in the world. By far her greatest asset was a simple one: She deeply wanted to get better and was willing to work to make that happen. While there is much work left to be done with her relationships, they are no longer static, no longer stuck in the old systems and patterns. E.S.’s relationships are now dynamic and moving in healthier directions. I’m delighted to report that she’s been sober for over two years and has successfully quit smoking. Way to go E.S.!

*If you’re open to therapy, to self-discovery, to changing some behaviors, Doug will help you do it. He’s not like any other therapist; he’s a very special man.*

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