

By: BERNADETTE Y. CONNOR

# MALE ABUSE

A Short

Bernadette Y. Connor / [byconnor@verizon.net](mailto:byconnor@verizon.net) / 215.817.3084  
9/1/2013

FADE IN:

INT. THERAPY OFFICE / SESSION ROOM

Pleasantly decorated; two sofas and two high-back chairs, end tables.

A light snack buffet is set up on the wall with the large, one-way mirror.

ANTEROOM

Comfortably decorated. Snack table set in front of large window. All seats face the large window of session room.

Host, CECILY PARKS, enters with CAROLYN, wife of Percy; JESSICA, wife of David and LESLIE, girlfriend of Jack. They go to snack table and take seats.

CECILY

Carolyn, Jessica and Leslie,  
you have indicated a willingness  
to work through the problems in  
your relationships and today we  
will begin by observing your  
significant others in session  
on the other side of that window.  
They can't see or hear you and have  
no idea you are observing today.

SESSION ROOM

Host, JEREMY LONG, and three clients, PERCY, DAVID, and JACK enter and take seats.

JEREMY

Okay, guys, this is how our  
session will go. Each of you  
will introduce yourselves and  
share the event that made it  
abundantly clear that you needed  
help. I ask that those not  
speaking be respectful in any  
responses because you're all  
here because something is wrong.

JEREMY (CONT.)

Afterwards, we will discuss alternatives. Now, who will volunteer to go first?

Jack sips from his glass, sets it down, raises his hand.

JEREMY

Okay. Introduce yourself.

JACK

My name is Jack and my girlfriend's name is Leslie. We're planning to get married in a month.

ANTEROOM

The ladies CONGRATULATE Leslie. She blushes.

SESSION ROOM

Jack looks to Jeremy uncomfortably. Jeremy coaxes him on.

JACK

We've had our share of disagreements from time to time, but Leslie is passionate about every subject. Subjects that I'm totally neutral with.

INT. SHOE STORE - RE-ENACTMENT

Leslie tries on shoes. Jack nearby, stares off into space.

LESLIE

You like these, honey?

Jack turns; looks and shrugs.

JACK

Yeah. Nice.

LESLIE

You said that about the last pair.

JACK

Yeah, last pair were nice too.

Jack stares off. Leslie's eyebrow arches, she rolls her eyes and sighs.

LESLIE

(mumbles)

Idiot.

INT. MAKE-UP COUNTER - RE-ENACTMENT

Leslie smears on lipstick, smacks her lips, turns to Jack.

LESLIE

Does this color look good  
on me?

Jack glances quickly.

JACK

Yeah, yeah. Not bad.

Leslie punches his shoulder hard. Jack grimaces.

LESLIE

I asked you did the color  
look good?!

JACK

And I said, yeah.

Leslie sucks her teeth, rolls her eyes; sighs.

INT. SUPERMARKET / CANNED GOODS AISLE - RE-ENACTMENT

Leslie reads the labels of canned tuna. Jack, behind the cart, flips through the pages of a racing magazine.

LESLIE

Do you prefer Chicken of The  
Sea or Starkist?

Jack flips the page of magazine. Leslie turns toward him, tilts her head, sighs.

LESLIE

Jack. Jack.

Jack reads on. Leslie throws a can of tuna. It hits Jack in the face. Blood spurts from a wound over his eye. Jack covers his face with his hand.

JACK

Jesus Christ, Leslie.

Leslie stomps off and leaves him.

RE-ENACTMENT ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE / SESSION ROOM

Jack lightly strokes his eyebrow. Rolls up his sleeve, shows puncture scar in his forearm.

JACK

Fifteen stitches to close.  
The time before that she  
stabbed me with a wine bottle  
opener. I love her, but . . .

Percy and David glance at each other and frown.

PERCY

Oh, I know that hurt. Wow.

DAVID

Let my wife hit me in the head  
with a can. She won't go down  
another can aisle as long as  
she lives. We'll be eating frozen.

ANTEROOM

Angry, Leslie stands; glares at the glass.

LESLIE

I don't believe he's telling  
people that crap!

CECILY

Did you do those things, Leslie?

Carolyn and Jessica, flaccid expressions, shrug.

LESLIE

Yeah. So what! He ignores me all the time! I bet I got his attention that day!

CAROLYN / JESSICA

Uh huh. Sure did.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

How did you respond, Jack?

JACK

People in the store gave me paper towels to staunch the blood and I went to the hospital.

JEREMY

Did Leslie go to the hospital with you?

JACK

Yeah.

JEREMY

When they asked how it happened, what did you say?

Jack looks at the floor, uncomfortable.

ANTEROOM

Leslie stands up; paces.

LESLIE

He told them he was working on his car and the hood dropped.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Was there a confrontation with Leslie when you got home?

JACK

Confrontation with us only makes things worse. I just let her have her way. It's not worth the trouble.

JEREMY

And you intend to marry her? Why?

JACK

She's a great woman. Smart, warm, passionate and generous. Any man would be proud to have her.

DAVID

Not me. Women are hard enough to live with without them hitting me.

David and Perry high-five each other.

JEREMY

Okay, let's digest that for a while and move on. David.

David's eyes dart around the room. He scratches his chin, inhales; lets it out slowly.

DAVID

Okay. My wife would never hit me.

JACK

Why not?

DAVID

Because I would knock her out. 'Kay.

Jack shrugs.

DAVID

My name is David. My wife's name is Jessica. Nice girl

DAVID (CONT.)  
with a great big mouth. It's  
her weapon of choice and she  
wields it well.

ANTEROOM

Jessica, quizzical expression, head tilted. Carolyn and  
Leslie giggle.

SESSION ROOM

DAVID  
The incident that told me  
I needed help was on a Sunday.

INT. DAVID'S HOME / RECREATION ROOM - RE-ENACTMENT

David reclines; refreshments on end table next to him. Big  
screen television on football pre-game show.

KITCHEN - RE-ENACTMENT

Jessica bustles around, prepares a meal.

JESSICA  
David, did you tell your  
mom to bring the kids home  
early today?

Silence. Jessica wipes her hands, storms into

RECREATION ROOM - RE-ENACTMENT

JESSICA  
Did you hear what I asked?!

Calm, David shakes his head.

JESSICA  
Did you tell your mom to  
bring the kids early?

DAVID  
Naw. You can call her.



JESSICA

I told you to do it an  
hour ago!

DAVID

I forgot.

Jessica moves in front of the television. She points to  
the telephone.

JESSICA

Do it now.

David waves his hand; frowns miserably.

DAVID

Get out of the way, Jess.  
You can call. Damn!

JESSICA

This is the same crap you  
pull every Saturday, Sunday  
and Monday night! You don't  
have to do a damn thing and I'm  
supposed to do it all until  
football season ends! Well,  
I'm not doing it!

DAVID

You better get from in front  
of that t.v.!

JESSICA

And if I don't?!

DAVID

Don't push me, Jessica!

Jessica puts her hands on her hips.

JESSICA

I'm not pushing, David.  
And I ain't moving either.  
Call your mother.

David leans forward in the chair.

DAVID  
Move!

JESSICA  
Call!

DAVID  
Move!!

JESSICA  
Call!!

David leaps out of chair. He and Jessica are face to face.

DAVID  
I've had enough of your shit  
for one day, Jessica! Move!

JESSICA  
And I've had enough of your  
shit to last a lifetime!  
Call your damn mother and  
tell her to bring the kids!

LATER - RE-ENACTMENT

David and Jessica still argue. On the television halftime festivities are on.

DAVID  
I've missed half the damn  
game with you and this  
bullshit! Now move!

Jessica doesn't budge. David grabs her arms. She struggles. He picks her up, takes her to the

HALLWAY - RE-ENACTMENT

David shoves Jessica into the closet, slams it shut; locks the door. Jessica shakes, kicks and bangs on the door.

JESSICA (O.S.)  
Open this damn door!

RECREATION ROOM - RE-ENACTMENT

David reclines with a beer. The game plays on the t.v.  
(O.S.) Jessica SHOUTS.

JESSICA (O.S.)  
Let me out! Let me out!

David picks up the remote, turns up the volume.  
(O.S.) Jessica SCREAMS.

The doorbell RINGS. David's shoulders slump.

HALLWAY - RE-ENACTMENT

David walks by closet; kicks the closet door.

DAVID  
Shut the hell up, Jessica!

David flings open front door. Two POLICE OFFICERS face him.

RE-ENACTMENT ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - SESSION ROOM

David leans forward.

DAVID  
They charged me with spousal  
abuse and it stuck. I have  
to participate in this nut  
charade or go to jail.

ANTEROOM

Jessica jumps to her feet.

JESSICA  
Next time you lock me in  
a closet you will go to  
jail, asswipe!

CECILY  
Did you testify against him  
for abusing you, Jessica?

Jessica smirks.

JESSICA

No.

LESLIE

I would've.

SESSION ROOM

Jeremy turns to Percy. Percy's eyes roll up in his head; he shakes it slowly.

PERCY

My name is Percy and my wife's name is Carolyn.

Percy grimaces; chews his cheek nervously.

PERCY

Okay, my tale of woe that broke the camel's back is . . .

ANTEROOM

Carolyn lets out a loud sigh.

CAROLYN

Oh, boy. Here we go. Get out your hankies, girls.

EXT. PERCY & CAROLYN'S HOME - RE-ENACTMENT

Percy pulls up in the driveway of expensive single home; gets out of his car, walks to the mailbox and retrieves the mail. He flips as he walks.

INT. PERCY & CAROLYN'S HOME / DINING ROOM - RE-ENACTMENT

Percy sits, opens mail at the table.

PERCY

What the hell? No, there must be some mistake. No way my wife bought a purse that costs six hundred and thirty dollars. No way.

Percy moves on to another envelope. He reads; grimaces and clutches his head.

PERCY

This woman's out of her mind! I told her not to do this again!

(O.S.) DOOR SLAMS.

Carolyn sweeps in with shopping bags. Percy jumps to his feet.

PERCY

Take it back! All of it!  
Right now!

CAROLYN

Hello, Percy. My day was pretty good. How was yours?

PERCY

Unless there's a life support system in one of those bags for one of us, take it back.

Carolyn rolls her eyes, waves her hand, turns and leaves. Percy follows her to the

KITCHEN - RE-ENACTMENT

Carolyn strolls through and puts down her bags. She opens the refrigerator door.

PERCY

I'm so not playing with you, Carolyn. If you don't take that back, along with the six hundred dollar pocketbook, the thirteen hundred dollar bedding and the eight hundred dollars worth of cosmetics, I swear I will kill you.

CAROLYN

Oh, you won't be killing me,  
Percy. You knew who I was when  
you married me. You pick from  
the top shelf, you pay for the  
top shelf.

Percy glares at Carolyn. She sips from a bottle of  
Perrier.

PERCY

(calm)

Carolyn, we're in debt like  
you wouldn't believe. I can't  
afford to have you living high  
right now. Can you help me get  
over this hump? I'll let you  
build me another. I promise.

Percy smiles at her. Carolyn smiles back sweetly.

CAROLYN

What's a little financial hump  
for a big, strong, smart man like  
you, Percy? You told me I would  
want for nothing if I married you.  
Remember?

PERCY

Yes, I remember. And I fully  
intend to keep that promise. It's  
just that right now I'm strapped  
for cash. You do know you don't  
work, don't you?

Carolyn points at the bags.

CAROLYN

I want what's in those bags. I  
want that purse. I want that  
bedding. You'll figure out how  
to pay for it.

BEDROOM - NIGHT - RE-ENACTMENT

Carolyn sleeps comfortably. Percy sits up, sighs deeply;  
taps her shoulder. She frowns; turns toward him.

CAROLYN

This had better be good, Percy.

PERCY

Are you taking that stuff  
back tomorrow?

CAROLYN

Not that again. How many  
times do I have to tell  
you, no, I'm not taking  
it back.

PERCY

I'm begging you to.

CAROLYN

You can stop begging. The  
answer is no. There's a  
sale on tomorrow. I promise  
to only buy sale items to save  
you a few bucks. Okay?

Percy looks down on his wife with a flat expression. He reaches out; clutches her throat in his fist. He looks in her eyes.

PERCY

What do you want more? To  
live or to shop?

Percy's anger escalates; his grip tightens. Carolyn squirms and twitches; her hands go to his fist.

CAROLYN

(whisper)

I'll take it all back tomorrow.

RE-ENACTMENT ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - ANTEROOM

Carolyn smirks; rolls her eyes.

CAROLYN

I would have promised to paint the Ben Franklin bridge in nothing but a thong at that moment. I couldn't breathe.

CECILY

Did you take it all back?

CAROLYN

Yeah. Then I bought it all back on a different credit card.

SESSION ROOM

Percy fidgets; sits back.

JEREMY

Do you know what type of abuse you've suffered, Percy?

PERCY

No, I don't.

JEREMY

It's financial abuse. How did you feel when you opened those bills?

PERCY

Angry and impotent. I make too much money to not be able to pay my bills each month.

Jeremy nods.

JEREMY

Okay, guys. Now that we know what we're working with, let's move on to other possible scenarios.

David, Jack and Percy exchange suspicious glances.

ANTEROOM



Carolyn, Jessica and Leslie stare at the window intensely.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Let's begin with you, Jack.  
Do you know what kind of  
abuse you suffered?

JACK

Physical.

JEREMY

How do you feel about Leslie  
hitting you?

JACK

I'm angry and helpless.

DAVID

She's a woman. How can you  
be helpless?

INT. SUPERMARKET / CAN GOOD AISLE - POTENTIAL SCENARIO

Leslie reads the labels of canned tuna. Jack, behind the  
cart, flips through the pages of a racing magazine.

LESLIE

Do you prefer Chicken of the  
Sea or Starkist?

Jack flips the page of magazine. Leslie turns toward him,  
tilts her head; sighs.

LESLIE

Jack. Jack.

Jack reads on. Leslie throws a can of tuna. It hits Jack  
in the face. Blood spurts from a wound over his eye. Jack  
covers his face with his hand.

Jack wipes the blood out of his eye, picks up a can of tuna  
and throws it at Leslie. She turns. The can strikes her  
at the base of her head. She falls.

POTENTIAL SCENARIO ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - SESSION ROOM

JACK

She dies. I go to prison  
for murder. For a can of  
tuna.

ANTEROOM

Leslie frowns; slides back in her chair. The others frown  
and exchange glances.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

So, you know violence isn't  
the answer and you've shown  
great restraint under pressure.  
What do you see as an answer  
to the violence in your  
relationship, Jack?

DAVID

End it, fool. End it now!  
Girlie's got cemetery or  
penitentiary written all  
over her. No happy endings!

PERCY

She could get help, man.  
Just like guys get help for  
anger.

JACK

Is therapy for Leslie an  
option for us?

Jeremy nods.

ANTEROOM

Leslie sucks her teeth; turns her head.

CECILY

Is therapy for you an  
option, Leslie?

LESLIE

I'm here because he  
has a problem listening!  
If he gets medication for  
A.D.D., I'll consider it!

CECILY

Is that really how you feel?  
You could have blinded him  
with that can. Don't you  
feel any remorse for it?

All eyes are on Leslie. No response.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Why can't you focus on her  
interests, Jack?

JACK

What do you mean? Shoes  
and lipstick colors? That  
stuff doesn't even register  
for me. She always looks good  
to me without me telling her  
what to wear.

JEREMY

Do you tell her that?

JACK

(mumbles)

Sometimes.

ANTEROOM

Leslie jumps to her feet and paces.

LESLIE

Liar!

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Do you think you could  
cultivate a tiny interest  
in shoes and lipstick?

Jack laughs.

JACK

Hell no.

DAVID

If she pops you with another  
can, you might.

They all laugh.

JEREMY

Think about it a while, Jack.  
We'll come back to you.  
David, your case is one of  
the more common. Do you know  
what kind of abuse your wife  
subjects you to?

DAVID

She's a nagaholic! It's all  
verbal, all the time! Day  
and night!

The others laugh.

JEREMY

Okay. We all know that  
women are more verbal than  
men. How do you feel when  
Jessica goes on and on?

DAVID

Angry as hell. The more  
she talks, the angrier I  
get.

JEREMY

Have you ever locked her  
in a closet before?

DAVID

Yes.

JEREMY

Ever hit her before?

David glares at Jeremy.

DAVID

No. But I shoved a sock  
in her mouth once.

JEREMY

So, you know that hitting  
a woman is unacceptable and  
you restrain yourself from  
actually striking her. But,  
what if . . .

INT. DAVID'S HOME / RECREATION ROOM - POTENTIAL SCENARIO

David and Jessica argue. On television football game  
halftime festivities.

DAVID

I've missed half the damn  
game with you and this  
bullshit! Now move!

Jessica doesn't budge. David grabs her arms. She  
struggles. He picks her up, takes her to the

HALLWAY - POTENTIAL SCENARIO

David shoves Jessica into the closet, slams it shut;  
locks the door. Jessica kicks and bangs on the door.

JESSICA (O.S.)

Open this damn door!

RECREATION ROOM - POTENTIAL SCENARIO

David reclines with a beer. The game plays on the t.v.

JESSICA (O.S.)

Let me out! Let me out!

David picks up the remote, turns up the volume.  
(O.S.) Jessica SCREAMS.

David reaches down, pulls off his sock, gets up and heads  
for the

HALLWAY

David opens the closet door. Jessica pants; tries to dash  
past him.

David catches her by the neck and squeezes. Her mouth  
opens. He packs the sock into her mouth; pushes her back  
into the closet, slams the door shut and locks it.

The doorbell RINGS. David's shoulders slump. He meanders  
to the door; flings it open. Two POLICE OFFICERS face him.

OFFICER #1

There's been a report of a  
woman screaming here.

DAVID

She's not screaming anymore.

OFFICER #1

Where is she?

David strolls down the hall, opens the closet door. Jessica  
seizes violently on the floor of the closet with the sock  
in her mouth.

POTENTIAL SCENARIO ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE / SESSION ROOM

Panicked, David shakes his head feverishly.

DAVID

That can't happen. It's  
a sock. Her hands aren't  
tied.

JEREMY

If you've already choked her,  
she's oxygen deprived and  
gasping when you pack a sock

JEREMY (CONT.)  
into her mouth. A piece goes  
down her throat.

David gets up and paces.

DAVID  
Her hands are free. She  
can pull it out!

Percy turns to face David.

PERCY  
But she's been hollering  
and screaming in the closet.  
Banging and kicking on the door.  
She's hyped and could have hurt  
herself in there before you  
shoved the sock in her mouth.

David smirks and paces.

DAVID  
Man, please.

JEREMY  
Even if she gets it out, David,  
there's no guarantee that her  
oxygen capacity hasn't expired.  
Not enough to kill her, but  
enough to cause a seizure. A  
seizure that can result in  
brain damage. It would be  
a fluke, but it could happen.

ANTEROOM

Jessica sits still, not breathing. Cecily rushes over and  
rubs her back.

CECILY  
It's okay. You're okay.  
That was only a potential,  
Jessica.

JESSICA

He could've killed me with that sock.

CECILY

That's just one of a thousand things that can happen in heated exchanges. Highly unlikely. Calm down.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Okay, David. Can you learn to let your wife talk without reacting negatively?

DAVID

Yeah. Sure. I let Jess go on and ignore her. She turns into his old lady (points to Jack) and cracks me in the head with a can.

JEREMY

Think about it. Your turn, Percy. How do you feel when Carolyn dismisses your complaints about her spending?

PERCY

Furious. She's eating filet mignon for lunch at the city's best restaurants and I'm on the verge of applying for food stamps.

ANTEROOM

Carolyn rolls her eyes dramatically.

CAROLYN

My husband is such a whiner. Look at me. Am I worth every penny he's spending, or what?

Leslie and Jessica frown.



LESLIE/JESSICA

Or what!

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Have you considered asking  
her to go to an addiction  
group?

Percy cheers up.

PERCY

Do you think she's addicted  
to shopping?

JEREMY

Possibility. If she's willing  
to risk her marriage for it,  
it's a great possibility.

ANTEROOM

CAROLYN

Oh now I'm a junkie.

CECILY

Yes, a possession junkie.  
A shopaholic.

Carolyn's hand goes to her throat. She strokes it gently.

CAROLYN

Is that a real illness?

SESSION ROOM

INT. PERCY & CAROLYN'S HOME / BEDROOM - POTENTIAL SCENARIO

Carolyn sleeps comfortably. Percy sits up, taps her  
shoulder. She frowns and turns toward him.

CAROLYN

This had better be good, Percy.

PERCY

Are you taking that stuff back tomorrow?

CAROLYN

Not that again. How many times do I have to tell you, no, I'm not taking it back.

PERCY

I'm begging you to.

CAROLYN

You can stop begging. The answer is no. There's a sale on tomorrow. I promise to only buy sale items to save you a few bucks. Okay?

Percy gets out of bed. Walks over to Carolyn's purse, takes out her wallet. He removes the credit cards, picks up her scissors and cuts them.

Carolyn leaps out of bed. She wrestles with Percy for the cards. They tussle; fall to the floor. Carolyn GASPS.

Percy looks down; the scissor handle protrudes from her chest.

POTENTIAL SCENARIO ENDS

INT. THERAPY OFFICE / SESSION ROOM

Percy sits dumbfounded.

ANTEROOM

Carolyn weeps.

CAROLYN

I really would have attacked him if he had cut my cards. Does that mean I have a problem?

CECILY

You tell me, Carolyn. You're willing to fight and possibly

CECILY (CONT.)  
die for credit cards.

Carolyn stares at Percy through the window.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY  
Since we're already on Percy,  
let's stick with it for wrap  
up. Percy, have you offered  
Carolyn any other alternatives  
besides putting down her  
credit cards?

PERCY  
I've asked her to try budgeting  
and she laughs at me. I've  
asked her to limit her charges  
to certain cards during the  
month. She laughs at me.  
I've tried to explain that  
the sales and discounts don't  
matter when you're paying  
twenty-three percent interest.

ANTEROOM

CECILY  
Why are you so resistant to  
helping your husband manage  
your family finances, Carolyn?

CAROLYN  
I'm not resistant. He knew  
who I was when he married me.

LESLIE  
Who are you?

Carolyn flashes Leslie a nasty glance.

CAROLYN  
I'm a woman who expects the  
best out of life.

CECILY

But he said you didn't work.  
If you had not married Percy,  
how would you manage the best  
out of life?

CAROLYN

Someone else would have footed  
the bill.

Jessica raises her hand.

JESSICA

You sound like a prostitute.  
He's your husband.

SESSION ROOM

Jeremy looks Percy in the eyes.

JEREMY

If Carolyn were sitting here  
right this minute, what would  
be your best offer to remedy  
the stress in your relationship?

Percy sits quietly.

PERCY

I would first ask if she loves  
me. I don't think she does.  
If the answer to that was yes,  
I would ask that she follow a  
strict budget for a year. I  
really do believe she should  
attend some addiction group.  
And, I would like to see her  
work a part time job to begin  
to appreciate what it means  
to work for a living.

ANTEROOM

Carolyn's mouth drops open.

CAROLYN

Work?! He's crazy.

CECILY

Do you love him, Carolyn?

CAROLYN

Yes. I guess so. I'm  
here listening to this  
nonsense, aren't I?

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Those are realistic  
expectations, Percy.  
David, what about you?  
How do you plan to deal  
with Jessica's talking?

David looks from Percy to Jack; shrugs.

DAVID

How do you stop a woman  
from talking?

JEREMY

I didn't ask how do you  
plan on stopping her from  
talking. I asked, what  
can you do to deal with  
her talking?

DAVID

Now that socks and closets  
are out, I'm out of ideas.

JEREMY

Anyone want to offer David  
some suggestions?

JACK

You could leave when you  
think her talking is about  
to make you boil over.

ANTEROOM

Jessica crosses her arms.

JESSICA

Oh, he'd better not walk out  
while I'm talking.

CECILY

Why not?

Confused, Jessica frowns.

JESSICA

Where would he go? No.

SESSION ROOM

DAVID

If I walk out of that house,  
which would never happen because  
I pay the mortgage, Jessica  
would give birth to mountains.

JEREMY

So, the mortgage payment and  
the birth of mountains  
threatens to end your life  
as you know it. Why are the  
two of you afraid to separate  
for brief periods of time?

ANTEROOM

Jessica yells at the window.

JESSICA

Because I don't trust a man  
I can't see!

CECILY

Why not?

JESSICA

Because. You give them space  
and they fill it with other  
women like her. (Points to  
Carolyn.

CAROLYN

Women like me don't want your husband, honey. He doesn't make nearly enough money.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Since taking a walk is out, what would you suggest?

DAVID

My wife has no interests outside of our house. She needs some friends, a hobby, a class . . . anything.

ANTEROOM

Jessica sits back, looks around nervously.

CECILY

Do you have outside interests, Jessica?

JESSICA

My family is my life. I don't need outside interests. I don't have time for outside interests.

LESLIE

No wonder you're driving him crazy. You're crazy. Every woman should have friends to talk to about what's bothering them.

Cecily nods.

CECILY

What about extended family, Jessica? Your mom, dad, sisters, brother, cousins?

JESSICA

My family hates David.

SESSION ROOM

David moves to the end of his chair.

DAVID

Jessica has told her family  
all kinds of things about me.  
They hate me because she's  
told them stuff to make them  
hate me. They think she should  
leave me.

JEREMY

What do you all do for holidays?

DAVID

We go to dinner and everybody  
treats me like a leper. Jess  
gets offended and we don't  
visit again until the next year.

JEREMY

Ultimately, if she were here  
right now, what would you offer  
as a solution?

DAVID

(shrugs)

I would suggest Jessica develop  
some outside interests. Find  
something to laugh about.

ANTEROOM

Jessica sits back, crosses her arms. She looks off into  
space.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Let's give Jack a chance  
at resolution. If Leslie  
were here right now, what  
would be your healing offer?

DAVID

Run. Run, Jack, run.



PERCY  
Fast. Run fast.

ANTEROOM

Angry, Leslie frowns and looks from woman to woman.

LESLIE  
He didn't ask them anything!  
He asked Jack!

SESSION ROOM

Jack rubs his hands together, smiles timidly.

JACK  
I would suggest that Leslie  
go to anger management classes.

JEREMY  
That's a good start, but what  
about what you would do to  
make it better? Your disinterest  
fuels her anger.

DAVID  
Let her shop by herself.

JACK  
(nods)  
I could do that.

ANTEROOM

Leslie jumps up.

LESLIE  
No you won't be leaving me  
to shop alone!

CECILY  
Why not?

LESLIE  
Men who love their women  
shop with them!

CAROLYN

Says who? I don't want  
Percy with me and I know  
he loves me, honey!

LESLIE

Yeah, and you've got a shopping  
addiction. Everybody knows  
addicts like to get high  
in seclusion.

JESSICA

If you love him, why do you  
hit him with cans?

LESLIE

He ignores me! Just like  
David ignores you! You  
harp! I hit! Same creature!

Cecily stands, raises her hands.

CECILY

Okay, ladies. Let's not turn  
on each other. We're here to  
find solutions to your problems.

All three women turn their backs on each other.

SESSION ROOM

JEREMY

Okay, guys. You're all  
armed with suggestions.  
Now is the time you get  
to offer them to your  
significant other.

All three men look at Jeremy with surprise.

JACK

Now?!

JEREMY

When would you like to  
begin, Jack?

Jack looks to David and Percy and shrugs helplessly.

JACK

Now's as good a time  
as any, I guess.

JEREMY

Good. Because the women  
have been observing this  
session and they know  
exactly how you feel. If  
couples want to make it  
over the hump of differences,  
they have to first face them.

RESOLUTION ROOM #1

The room is comfortably decorated. One sofa and two high  
back chairs.

Percy, Carolyn, Jeremy and Cecily enter. Percy and Carolyn  
are directed to sit on the sofa. Jeremy and Cecily face  
them in the chairs.

Percy and Carolyn don't make eye contact. Their knees face  
away from each other.

JEREMY

Carolyn, Percy would like to  
talk about what's provoked him  
to react violently toward you.

CAROLYN

I already knew that before  
I got here. He hates my  
shopping habit.

Percy's head swivels toward her.

PERCY

You mean, you know and agree to  
having an addiction to  
shopping?

CAROLYN

I wouldn't stretch it all

CAROLYN (CONT.)

the way to an addiction.  
But, I will admit that I  
have a strong compulsion to  
shop, even if I don't need to.

PERCY

Will you go to a shopaholic's  
clinic, Carolyn?

Carolyn pouts and shrugs.

CAROLYN

I guess so.

PERCY

Are you doing this because  
you love me and want to save  
our relationship, or are you  
doing it because you finally  
see that you need it?

CAROLYN

Honestly, Percy?

Percy nods.

CAROLYN

I really need to stop shopping  
so much. And, I wouldn't try to  
stop just because I'm a financial  
drain on you. I feel that a man  
should make enough to allow his  
woman certain luxuries.

PERCY

Would you consider taking on a  
part time job as part of your  
therapy?

Carolyn frowns, shakes her head miserably.

CAROLYN

I don't know if I can do the  
work thing, Percy.

PERCY

Do you love me, Carolyn?

Carolyn studies Percy. Finally, she nods.

CAROLYN

Can we set a time for me  
to work? Like three months.

PERCY

If you can do three months  
I'll accept that. What about  
the clinic?

CAROLYN

Will you buy me a new outfit  
for each session?

Percy's shoulders drop in defeat.

PERCY

No!

CAROLYN

I knew you would say that.

Carolyn takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly.

CAROLYN

Okay, Percy. I'll go to  
an addiction group and work  
part time for three months.  
Can I keep my credit cards?

PERCY

No! Not right now. I'll  
give you a cash allowance.  
That way you won't be able  
to go over it.

Carolyn turns toward Percy.

CAROLYN

Are you sorry you choked me,  
Percy?

Percy turns toward her. They look at each other.

PERCY

I'm so sorry I choked you  
I can't begin to tell you.  
I love you and I want to  
give you the world, honey.  
I just can't afford it at  
this pace.

FOYER

David and Jack sit outside the resolution room. The door opens. Carolyn exits; followed by Percy.

Percy walks over to David and Jack, shakes their hands.

PERCY

Good luck, guys.

DAVID

Yeah, you too.

Jack nods solemnly.

Jessica approaches. David rises. They enter

RESOLUTION ROOM #1

David and Jessica sit next to each other on the sofa. They face Jeremy and Cecily, already seated.

JEREMY

Jessica, David would like  
to talk about what's provoked  
him to react violently toward  
you.

Jessica's wide eyes flow to David's face. David swallows hard, sighs quickly.

DAVID

You talk too much, Jess.  
You tell all of our business  
to your family and they hate  
me, and you act like you don't  
know why.

Jessica's eyes don't waver. She listens. David rubs his hands nervously.

DAVID

You start early in the morning with what you want me to do. You're in my ear all the way to the door. Then, you greet me with more talking when I come home. If I try to find a corner to hide in, you find it and bombard me with more talk.

JESSICA

How am I supposed to let you know what I need you to do if I don't tell you? If I don't mention it again, you forget it. If I remind you a hundred times, you still forget it.

DAVID

I forget because I wipe it away with all of the other inane things you've said, honey. Do you even know what I'm talking about now?

Jessica crosses her arms, tears dance in her eyes.

JESSICA

Yeah. You want me to shut up.

DAVID

Not just shut up, Jess. I want you to tell me what you want to tell me, but only tell me once; definitely not more than twice. And don't minimize what you really want by adding nonsense on top of it. For instance, if you tell me to call my mom and tell her to bring the kids home early, don't add reminders about cutting the grass and cleaning the gutters and your mother's next-door neighbor's bad

DAVID (CONT.)  
habit of putting trash in her  
trash basket. By the time half of  
that's out; I've gone deaf.

Jessica nods briefly. Jeremy smiles.

JEREMY  
Give her your potential  
resolutions, David.

David takes Jessica's hands in his. He looks into her  
eyes.

DAVID  
I think you need to find  
some outside interests to  
share your thoughts with.  
Not to talk about me and  
the kids, but things that  
make you happy.

JESSICA  
I am happy, David. You're  
not.

DAVID  
I'm happy, Jess. I wouldn't  
trade you and the kids for  
anything in this world. I've  
loved you since the first day  
I met you. You don't have  
anything to prove to me.

Jessica's tears flow in earnest.

JESSICA  
I don't know what will make  
me happy, David. My life  
has been weaved around you  
and the kids and I don't know  
what else there is for me to  
do. When would I fit it into  
my day anyway? I'm always  
cooking, cleaning, organizing  
the kids' schedules.



David takes a tissue out of the box near him, dabs at Jessica's tears.

DAVID

Take your time, Jess. Think about it. If I have to pay someone to help with the house, I'll do that. If I need to pay someone to take the kids to their games when we can't, I'll do that. The yapping to the point that I explode has to end.

CECILY

Before you were married, Jessica, what did you do for entertainment?

Jessica sniffs.

JESSICA

All the things young people do. I went to the movies, dances. My passion was painting. There were some who thought I was good.

DAVID

I never knew you painted.

JESSICA

You never asked me, David.

DAVID

You talk so . . . Let's look into you getting back to painting. Anything else?

JESSICA

I loved traveling. But I don't want to do it alone.

DAVID

You won't have to, Jess. I'll go with you.

JESSICA

Without the kids?

DAVID

Is that what you want?

Jessica nods.

FOYER

Jack sits alone; taps his foot anxiously. David and a tearful Jessica come out of the resolution room.

David moves to Jack and shakes his hand.

DAVID

Do what you have to do, Jack.  
Life is too short for insanity.

Jack nods. David and Jessica walk off. Leslie approaches. Jack stands.

RESOLUTION ROOM #1

With distance between them, Jack and Leslie sit on the sofa; their knees face Jeremy and Cecily.

JEREMY

Leslie, Jack would like to  
talk about the violence in  
your relationship.

Jack sits in silence. He looks at Leslie for a long time. Leslie's head tilts.

LESLIE

Well? Go on. Tell me how  
you want me to go to anger  
management. Tell me you  
think I should shop alone  
so that I don't lose it  
when you ignore me in  
public. Go on, Jack.  
I'm waiting.

Jack sits.

JEREMY

What are you feeling right  
now, Jack?

JACK

That I can't do this.

LESLIE

You can't do what? I told you I didn't want to come to this stupid crap in the first place.

CECILY

Did you think your relationship would survive without some kind of intervention?

LESLIE

This isn't what I would call intervention. This is inconvenient and irrelevant.

Leslie jumps to her feet.

LESLIE

Let's go, Jack.

JACK

I can't wager my life on the hope that you'll stop hitting me, Leslie. One day, you'll hit me and I'll hit back and one of us will either die or be maimed for life.

LESLIE

So, you want me to go to anger management, right? I can do that. How long is it?

JACK

Yes, I do want you to go. Not to save this relationship though. This one is over.

LESLIE

What?!

Leslie balls her fist and swings. Jack catches it in the palm of his hand. He looks up at her.

JACK

It's over.

FOYER

Jack exits the resolution room alone; closes the door behind him and walks down the hall.

LESLIE (O.S.)

(cries)

Don't leave me, Jack. Please.  
I'll go to those classes. I  
won't hit you anymore, honey.  
Please.

Jack stops, turns around, takes a step back.

(O.S) Leslie's wail gets louder and more pathetic.

Jack stops, turns around, shoves his hands in his pockets; walks away.

RESOLUTION ROOM #1 - LATER

Jeremy and Cecily in chairs, face each.

CECILY

My heart bleeds for Leslie,  
Jeremy. She's been hurt so  
deeply by something that she  
strikes out at the one person  
in the world who truly loves her.

JEREMY

True. But violence can't be  
tolerated in relationships.  
I think Jack made the correct  
decision for both of them.

FADE OUT:

THE END