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**Psychological and Spiritual Issues of Fatherhood:
Rabbinical Pastoral Counseling in a Group Setting
For Jewish Men After the Birth/Arrival of Children –
Overcoming the Archetypal Authoritarian Father Model**

By Robert Brent Lennick, Rabbi

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Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry

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Dedication

"A friend of ours, suddenly a father writes:
Thirty minutes after her birth, my
daughter was already taking my
measure. She lay in my lap
startlingly alert, scanning me as I,
scanned her, our gazes moving about
each other's bodies, limbs, faces, eyes
-repeatedly returning to the eyes,
returning and then locking...My
eyes locked on hers, I'd had a sense
that I was gazing into origins - that
this gaze of hers was welling up at
me from deep beyond the past's past.
Of course, that sense of things was
all wrong, for, eye to eye, it was *she*
who was gazing into the past. I was
gazing into the future's future."

Lawrence Weschler
From "The New Yorker," March 9, 1987

To my dear, dear daughter Sarah
from whom I learn how to see;
especially Heavenward.

And to my dearest Heidi,
without whom there would be
neither Sarah nor me;
as God would have us.

Old Greenwich, CT
March 2001

Chapter 1: Description of the Issue

Background: Longstanding anecdotal evidence suggests that some fathers report a sense of alienation or being "left out" of the newly defined family system when children are born. Fathers, especially of young children may benefit from being able to give and receive support as they adjust to their new dual roles as husband and father. It seems some men adapt well using intuitive sensibilities, while others fare poorly. Most are probably somewhere between these two ends of the continuum.

As has been true in my own personal experience, and throughout my years of congregational service beginning in 1979 as a student rabbi, I have observed that the advent of fatherhood initiates introspection by many men regarding their own paternal relationships. Guided reflection in the context of a structured group setting may enable men to delve into the meaning of fatherhood and the operative models influencing the fatherhood role. Such a group experience may help men to view themselves more fully as men, as husbands and as fathers and deepen their understanding of the opportunities which present themselves at this transforming time of life.

Currently, there are many fathers with young children (3 years and under) who express a variety of feelings toward the other members of their family systems as the roles within a family system seem to change when children are born. Such feelings may include, but are not limited to: A sense of loss related to the redistribution of affection and attention by the spouse; a loss of "being fathered" which is suddenly replaced with "being a father"; a loss of independence through the most basic and intense introduction of dependence in the new-born; a sense of isolation caused by the strong natural bonding of mother and child. The rise of these feelings may be perceived through the prism of the

experience of the man's family of origin, particularly with respect to issues of separation and loss, keystones in the development of self-esteem, identity and self-nurturing skills.

A pool of local men, both from my former congregation and in the community at large have expressed interest in this subject and participating in a group experience which would offer an opportunity to explore feelings about fatherhood. While much has been written about the maternal adjustment to motherhood, understanding of paternal emotions and conflicts upon the introduction of children call for continuing study and responsive modalities. There is a growing body of literature, which addresses concerns of men at many stages of the life cycle (See below, Chapter 2: Pertinent Clinical Principles). This literature is in part a response to the vast writing for women and by women regarding the evolving role of women in our society. Perhaps this growth of the women's identity movement has actually freed men, or at least influenced men to consider their own identity issues. It is important that men develop such literature and methodology for self-understanding, not in defense of the paternal or masculine experience, but rather to enable men to delve more freely into their emotionality and vulnerability as a means to greater well-being and self-acceptance. This striving for integration of the masculine and feminine parts within the person is of general value in the developing human being's repertoire of life. Such a well-rounded male might be called the, "egalitarian man."

As regards the specifically Jewish aspects of this work, much may be said and explored. Within a Jewish context, and specifically in the realm of non-Orthodox Judaism men have experienced dilution of most male-oriented and affirming activities that offer reflective or ritual experiences, specifically which foster solidarity of the male consciousness. This project intends to expand and create another aspect of fruitful non-

defensive diversity where there is value for men being together themselves. As a reflection of this egalitarian pillar of liberal Judaism, it is therefore of particular value within the non-Orthodox community for men to experience together their unique and sacred sense of self as an inherently valued member of the human family, the Jewish family and within his own most principal kin, his nuclear family, as may be reflected in the renewal of self-concept arrived at as a result of supportive, consciousness-growth experiences.

There is a "productive irony" that such egalitarian "differentiation" activities, viz. gathering strictly within an egalitarian defined male-only setting, in the context of this work might bring men together in affirmation of a truly universal democratic experience which aims to nurture a progressive model of manhood among men themselves. As women celebrate their unique experience, men in turn, having learned from the initiative of women, might also grow as the result of their own gender explorations. Through group experiences such as that proposed herein, an achieved unbifurcated, integrated, non-defensive form of inner gender understanding may add to the greater diversity, and a fortiori greater unity within the non-Orthodox Jewish community experience.

This work also provides an opportunity to explore the rootedness of various archetypal images of gender and how they impact upon the behavioral and attitudinal matrix of men's roles as fathers. The group experience offered in this project will attempt to elicit reflection by the participants about the role of religious archetypes in manifest behavior. In addition, the coalescence of cultural norms of masculine behavior and

internalized traditional archetypes will be subject to interpretation and commentary in the discussion that follows.

The Specific Needs To Be Addressed: The project will specifically explore the changing role of men in the family upon the introduction of children with the following goals: The primary goal is to provide a safe group-sharing environment, which will allow men to affirm common experiences, express the emotional content around the experiences aimed at identifying and owning grief in order to celebrate their real selves. Secondly, meaningful texts, stories and illustrations may be included to enable participants to achieve a better sense of role within the family as well as heightened satisfaction within the family system. This will be done with awareness that the introduction of such material may contain transferential and counter transferential content as coming from the "leader." It may turn out to be preferable to allow for a free-flowing group discussion without the introduction of referential materials or even specific definition of themes. This will be determined as the group process unfolds.

In anticipation of the culmination of the process, the group will be encouraged to compose a Prayer for Fatherhood as an expression of the group's learning and deepened awareness. Such an exercise may allow the unconscious stirrings of the participants to be more understandable and more deeply experienced within the context of the therapeutic supportive community.

The Relevance of This Project to Ministry in a Wider Context: As ministry in general tends to address life transitions, it seems progressive that rituals, pastoral care models and pastoral counseling techniques be brought to bear in the major transition men encounter upon reaching fatherhood. Rituals and educational programs have been utilized across denominations to address many of the major events of life, viz. sexuality, pregnancy, birth, childrearing, education, courtship and marriage, aging, retirement, death, mourning and return to living in the aftermath of loss. The development of concomitant psycho-religious group discovery and support activities are valuable enhancements to the array of guided creative, revelatory, liturgical, educational and redemptive moments offered to our congregants as pathways to a deepening sense of Godliness, personal health and well-being.

Chapter 2: Guiding and Informing Principles

Pertinent Religious Principles: Throughout this work, all Biblical, Talmudic and Midrashic references are taken from the *Davka Soncino Classics Collection* on CD-ROM (1991-1995).

Not a great deal has been written explicitly about the nature of fatherhood in Jewish tradition, although there are some very early references with which to begin this study. The family was suggestively termed, "bet av," "house of the father" in Genesis 24:38 and 46: 31. And in Num 26:54-55 the father is defined as the head of the family unit and owner of its property. A survey of Biblical references suggests an early operative view that fatherhood is modeled after the "Fatherhood of God." The following selected verses all portray the Fatherhood of God in stoic, controlling and judgmental images. The heuristic suggestion of these is that human fatherhood could be associated with the "Apollonian" typology described by Nietzsche (1872). In Exodus 4:22 with the notion that the son serves the Father, again in Deuteronomy. 14:1 we find reinforced the ideal of the commanding Father. In II Samuel 7:14 the Fatherhood of God is defined as the source of judgment and chastisement. And notably in II Chronicles 28:6, the father is portrayed as the provider of material subsistence.

Two verses in Isaiah, however, temper to some measure the authoritarian model of fatherhood. Isaiah 9:6 in referring to the child born as the "prince of peace," could suggest that introduction of a child might lead to "shalom bayit," or "peace of the family." And, in Isaiah 64:8 the Father, i.e. God is portrayed as the potter of clay, and as such the father may be seen as molder of a child's life suggesting a gentler, creative image of paternal involvement, what might be seen as a hint of a man's feminine side. Even Psalm 103: 13 suggests that a father show not only love, but even pity.

Genesis 9:24-27 reveals a model of fatherly blessing in which Noah issues both blessing and curse. The power of the father to approve or disdain the child is expressed and reiterated again and again in the Genesis Saga, cf. Genesis 27 and 49. The Biblical writers convey the leitmotif of the predominant power of the Father vividly.

The image of the paternal/child power struggle is perhaps expressed most provocatively in the Binding of Isaac story of Genesis 22. The idea that a father would "sacrifice" his son, or even agree to such a suggestion is indicative of the traditional Hebraic view of the all-powerful father and as such, is psychologically limited and even repugnant in the context of this study and generally to the modern student of human development.

Overall, the Hebrew Bible suggests a rather authoritarian role of the father in which feelings of compassion, expression of vulnerability, understanding of intentions in action and language, and interest in underlying emotional issues are all generally absent. Thus, the principles of fatherhood operative in the Hebrew Bible are for the most part, unconstructive, that is, lacking of concern for healthy human relations according to contemporary standards. One hopes to discover a softer way of fatherhood which both reflects the "masculine edge" and the "feminine gentleness" within the scope of ancient Jewish literature.

Given the great depth of the ancient scribes, further study reveals that more neutral gender ideals were in the minds of some, albeit, only a few writers. In Genesis 1:27 we find the oblique Hebrew verse which may be rendered: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." Rabbinic tradition and specifically various citations from the Talmud and Midrash

including B. Eruvin 18a, B. Berachot 61a, Gen. Rab. 55 and Lev. Rab. 14 offer alternative views of the creation of Adam and respectively the notions of gender and fatherhood. These Talmudic and Midrashic references suggest commentary on this phrase: "...male and female created *He them*." These interpretations propose that the original human being was a "them," that is, male and female, androgynous at the first.

A glimpse of this body of texts tells of legends suggesting that God's original intent had been to create two human beings, male and female; but instead, designed a single one with a male face looking forward, and a female face looking backwards. Still others hold that Adam was originally created as an androgyne of male and female bodies joined back to back. Since this made locomotion difficult and conversation awkward, God divided the androgyne and gave each half a new rear. Some writers wondered that in the eventual division into two separate beings, male and female, that each came away with only half of the original soul, forming the basis of the internal drive to search for and join with one's "soul mate," which in this metaphor is the other half of one's original soul from the time of Creation itself!

These vignettes while interesting from a literary and philological standpoint serve in this work as a basis for authenticating a traditionally based primitive image of a more well-rounded gender identity model. This idea that human beings are in origin androgynous is a valuable starting point for a progressive understanding of gender identity. Such a progressive paradigm included the awareness that male and female aspects of gender are also distinct and differentiated parts that *work together*. The notion that men and women possess both feminine and masculine aspects from the start is a valuable model for expanding beyond the normative Biblical ideal of authoritarian

Divinity qua masculinity and may help suggest to the men in this work, a traditionally based fatherhood model which counter the deep rooted dominant authoritarian scheme.

Pertinent Clinical Principles: There are many psychological principles, which can be brought to bear in this discussion, and the literature is growing. The recently formed Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity in 1997, a Division of the American Psychological Association underscores the growing need for and interest in men's studies in psychology. The issue of fatherhood as a psychological challenge is, however, not new. Freud's discussion of the Oedipal Crisis (1920) underpins most modern discussion of fatherhood and childhood development.

Wellisch (1957) in his work, *Isaac and Oedipus*, provides a fascinating discussion of the Oedipal Crisis and the Binding of Isaac as a heuristic model of psychic development and the archetype of man overcoming the anthropologically described basic infanticidal wish. He convincingly suggests that what Freud posed with Oedipus as a principle of psychic determinism was rather with the writers of the Abraham saga to be understood as an indicator of the moral evolution of the species.

The post-Freudian Object Relations School has encouraged the primacy of the maternal relationship in psychic development. Focusing on the pre-Oedipal phase of early life, the role of the father is routinely overlooked as a major factor in *most* Object Relations theory. And for both Traditional Drive and Object Relations theorists, the father is typically viewed as a source of anxiety for children in the pre-Oedipal, Oedipal and post-Oedipal stages. "Father" is the source of "fear of the other" while mother is the source of "sustenance and gratification." Winnicott (1956) suggested the more subtle notion that a healthy psychological environment for personality development includes the father, e.g. while the mother is holding the baby, the father is holding them both. Psychologically, therefore, the child's fear of the father may be of his own rage

experienced in confronting mother's absence, withholding, or other adjustments to changing transformational objects, projected onto the father, but not necessarily emanating from the father. From the infantile perspective, father, then, is perceived as the cause of fear, when in actuality, father may simply be the container, or receptor of anger. These dynamics form the basis of the common psychological motif of father as "other," infused with latent negative content.

Contemporary literature about the androgynous nature of manhood and a progressive definition of the paternal experience suggest men are subject to a variety of myths, which stifle their emotional expansiveness and expression. Various works by, Dittes (1985, 1996, 1999) which discuss issues that define "the male predicament," Yalom (2000) which addresses the dynamics between mother and son in the determination and unfolding of male gender identity, Gurian (1999, 2000) which deals with the moral development of men and societal structures which reinforce the stoic male model; Parke and Brott (1999) which addresses the myths and barriers that keep men from being the fathers they want to be; Kindlon and Johnson (1999, 2000) which explores the protection and freeing of the emotional life of boys; and, Brott and Ash (1995) which deals with the feelings of expectant fathers, all underscore the psychic habits which disable men in their journey to gender well-roundedness. Current clinical research relevant to this project includes: Joel M. Eichler, *"The Therapeutic Use of Men's Groups in the Practice of Psychotherapy"*; and Ignacio Jarero, *"The Masculine Archetypes Based in Jungian Analysis"*; and, the utilization of the well known indices: *The Male Role Norms Inventory* and *The Gender Role Conflict Scale*.

A review of all of this literature reveals a number of operative principles to be explored in this project:

- 1) Men confront unexplored feelings upon entering fatherhood.
- 2) Traditional views of male gender identity have discouraged exploration of these feelings.
- 3) This transition in a man's life is challenging and worthy of acknowledgement and exploration.
- 4) Men's group therapy models have been useful in enabling men to express their inner feelings and to gain acceptance of those feelings.
- 5) Sharing of vulnerability in group settings can be a source of great insight about evolving possibilities for male gender identity and healing of old hurts associated with being fathered.
- 6) Sharing and discussion of positive models of fatherhood can lead to greater emotional satisfaction and understanding by men returning to their family systems leading to increased "shalom bayit," peace in the family, as one achieves peace by owning and grappling with inner conflict.
- 7) Men are conditioned by society to respond to conflict within themselves and in the world outside with stoic mechanisms, which engender maintenance of the emotional status quo. Upon recognition of these often self-defeating, inauthentic ways of being, men desire to learn new possibilities of relating.
- 8) Men carry archetypal images of manhood, which reflect the powerful, genitive life force, which is reflected in men's "sacred swagger," the posture of non-affectivity, strict self-control and righteous confidence.
- 9) Men feel anxious about many aspects of life experience but are not taught how to manage or transform anxiety into creative relational behaviors.

- 10) Men are convinced that they are primarily "problem solvers" and estimate their worthiness in the inventory of solutions rather than in the quality of relationships.
- 11) Men are conditioned to believe that power is in the control of circumstances rather than in the possibility of trusting the providential nature of chaos.

Pertinent Sociological Data: In addition, the following represents a current review of various research and statistics regarding the benefits of healthy fathering in our society colloquially described as:

"The Effects of Fatherfullness"

1. According to a Gallup Poll, 90.3 percent of Americans agree that, "fathers make a unique contribution to their children's lives."

--Source: Gallup Poll, 1996. National Center for Fathering. **"Father Figures."** Today's Father 4.1 (1996):8.

--Source: The National Commission on Children. **"Speaking of Kids: A National Survey of Children and Parents."** Washington, DC, 1991.

2. A study on parent-infant attachment found that fathers who were affectionate, spent time with their children, and overall had a positive attitude were more likely to have securely attached infants.

--Source: Cox, M.J. et al. **"Prediction of Infant-Father and Infant-Mother Attachment."** Developmental Psychology 28 (1992): 474-483.

3. A study assessing the level of adaptation of one-year olds found that, when left with a stranger, children whose fathers were highly involved were less likely to cry, worry, or disrupt play than other one-year olds whose fathers were less involved.

--Source: Kotelchuk, M. **"The Infant's Relationship to His Father: Experimental Evidence."**
The Role of the Father in Child Development. by Michael Lamb. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley,
1981.

4. Father-child interaction has been shown to promote a child's physical well-being, perceptual abilities, and competency for relatedness with others, even at a young age.

--Source: Krampe, E.M. and P.D. Fairweather. **"Father Presence and Family Formation: A theoretical Reformulation."** Journal of Family Issues 14.4 (December 1993): 572-591.

5. A survey of over 20,000 parents found that when fathers are involved in their children's education including attending school meetings and volunteering at school, children were more likely to get A's, enjoy school, and participate in extracurricular activities and less likely to have repeated a grade.

--Source: **Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools.** National Center for Education Statistics. Washington DC: GPO, 1997.

6. Using nationally representative data on over 2,600 adults born in the inner city, it was found that children who lived with both parents were more likely to have finished high school, be economically self-sufficient, and to have a healthier life style than their peers who grew up in a broken home.

--Source: Hardy, Janet B. et al. **"Self Sufficiency at Ages 27 to 33 Years: Factors Present between Birth and 18 Years that Predict Educational Attainment Among children Born to Inner-city Families."**Pediatrics 99 (1997): 80-87.

7. In a 26-year longitudinal study on 379 individuals, researchers found that the single most important childhood factor in developing empathy is paternal involvement. Fathers who spent time alone with their kids performing routine childcare at least two times a week, raised children who were the most compassionate adults.

--Source: Koestner, Richard, Carol Franz, and Joel Weinberger. **"The Family Origins of Empathic Concern: A Twenty-Six Year Longitudinal study."** Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 58 (1990): 709-717

The following are facts regarding fatherhood in society. These are provided by the National Center for Fathering in Kansas City, MO. This material illustrates the crisis in this country regarding the lack of proximity and involvement of many fathers in the lives of their children. It is important not only to enable fathers to be involved with their children, but help fathers to become more healed, self-nurturing and gender well rounded as part of developing their inclination to follow through with their father roles:

1. An estimated 24.7 million children (36.3%) live absent their biological father.
2. There are almost 17 million children (25%) living with their single mothers.
3. 1.25 million or 32% of all births in 1995 were out-of-wedlock.
4. Today nearly 4 out of 10 first marriages end in divorce, 60% of divorcing couples have children, and over one million children each year experience the divorce of their parents.
5. One out of every six children is a stepchild.
6. There are nearly 1.9 million single fathers with children under 18.

7. 4 out of every 10 cohabitating couples have children present and of children born to cohabitating couples, only 4 out of 10 will see their parents marry. Those who do experience a 50% higher divorce rate.
8. 26% of absent fathers live in a different state than their children.
9. About 40% of the children who live in fatherless households haven't seen their fathers in at least a year while 50% of children who don't live with their fathers have never stepped foot in their father's home.
10. Children who live absent their biological fathers, on average, are more likely to be poor, experience educational, health, emotional and psychological problems, be victims of child abuse, and engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological mother and father.

Given these dramatic facts, the study of the psychic condition of men as a means of helping men grow as responsible and involved parents has serious implications for society at large. This model of localized opportunities for men to talk together in a safe, supportive environment may well provide some backdrop of encouragement for men to stick with their families, explore their own feelings of abandonment and fear and in reflecting in the presence of other men develop the *staying skill* to be the fathers that make a profound positive difference in the lives of their children.

Chapter 3: The Methodology

Approach and Procedures: The planned program is as follows:

1. Recruit a group of 6 men, plus myself as group leader who have become fathers via birth or adoption within the last 3 years. Preference would be given to fathers who have become first time fathers within the last year. Fathers with multiple children, but with a child of 3 years or under will be accepted if necessary.
2. The group will meet a total of 8 successive times on a weekly basis. 6 sessions will be planned and structured for 90 minutes. The last session, a "double session" of 180 minutes will allow for a proper termination of the group.

Proposed Working Outlines for the Sessions:

Session I: Introductions. Participants will explain their current fathering situation. Free flow discussion will be encouraged. Identifying common themes among participants is planned.

Session II: The group may address themes or be free flowing to allow an organic group process to emerge. The leader may provide relevant stories, texts or illustrations to encourage discussion and reflection.

Session III: Free flowing and/or theme discussion with or without supportive texts, etc.

Session IV: Free flowing and/or theme discussion with or without supportive texts, etc.

Session V: Inventory of what has been experienced. This will entail a discussion of results of the experience thus far: Insights gained, feelings realized, conflicts resolved.

Leader will suggest next session that the group ritualize the experience with a collective composition of a Prayer for Fatherhood.

Session VI: Discussion and composition of Prayer for Fatherhood. Group reading of Prayer for Fatherhood. Participants are asked to share Prayer with spouse in between sessions.

Session VII/VIII: Hearing of reactions to sharing of Prayer for Fatherhood with spouses. Filling out of termination questionnaire. Discussion of feelings about conclusion of group. Closing circle sharing of parting thoughts and feelings.

3. Texts, Reflections, Illustrations if used will have to be identified in between each session.

Assessment Methodology: Outcomes will be assessed with 4 methods:

1. Participants will be asked to express their sense of growth and new awareness in Session V.
2. Participants will be asked to share the Prayer for Fatherhood with their spouses, which will be followed up with sharing and discussion of that home activity in the final session. This discussion may reveal inclinations of participants' attitudes toward future experiences within their family systems.
3. At conclusion, participants will be asked to complete a termination questionnaire about their experience in the group and request their observations and suggestions about the process.
4. Pending the permission of the group members, a session will be audio taped as a means to retain impressions of verbal and non-verbal cues, content and flow of the experience as a basis for additional evaluation.

Chapter 4: Results

Description of Outcomes: The results of this process are described here based on the methodology proposed in Chapter Two. Three of the four proposed evaluation modalities were employed as planned: Participants were asked in Session V to express their sense of growth; They completed a questionnaire about their experience in the group (See Appendix C); and, Session VIII and part of the combined final session were audio taped with permission of the participants from which were gained explicit commentary about the process and outcome which are included below (See Appendix A).

The suggestion was made as planned as a source of evaluative material that the group compose a Prayer for Fatherhood which they declined in Session VI. It was therefore, not created nor shared with spouses, nor was reaction gathered at that time. However, a spontaneous prayer was offered by the participants at the closing of the group, which is found in transcript form, which reveals the sense of accomplishment and hope of many of the participants (See Appendix D).

The group was recruited as planned, by word of mouth, over a period of a few months. Finding men who were first time fathers with children under 3 years of age was more difficult to do than expected. In fact, finding fathers with young children who "had the time" or the "support of the wife" was generally challenging. Offering to hold the group meetings in the evening, or on the weekend turned out to be prohibitive to many potential participants. Time restraint was a serious concern for many of those approached in the recruitment process. Most fathers with young children would not make the additional time commitment away from their families.

Consequently, the group ended up being more diverse than planned in terms of age of children. This allowed for a slightly wider set of issues to be shared and the

"benefits of experience" being expressed by more veteran fathers to those with less experience. In addition, the presence of these "experienced" fathers enabled the display of the very authoritarian behavior under focus in this study. The diversity of the group influenced the outcome in a variety of ways as will be discussed below.

Upon being invited to the group, and at the group's outset each participant was told that the group served to address the specific needs described in Chapter 1 above. However, when asked during the final session, many of them expressed memory lapse regarding the specific purpose of the group. This may be a reflection of resistance and anxiety manifested in the unfolding group process, which is discussed below. At the beginning, they were also informed that this group was being constituted as part of my D. Min. course of study. At the first session each participant was asked to supply basic information about themselves which included: Age, years of marriage – previous and/or current, sex/age of children, status of parents' marriage, birth position in family of origin and what they defined as an "issue of interest in joining this group."

The group was constituted with the following 5 male participants in addition to myself as the facilitator. I was unable to recruit a 6th participant:

W. 37, married 6 years, 2 children (female) 1 and (female) 4, parents married 48 years, youngest of 6, issue: "Discipline."

N. 50, married 1st 18 years, current 8 years, 2 children (f) 15 (from first marriage, lives with the mother) and (m) 3 (current marriage), parents married 56 years, youngest of 2, issue: "Keeping what's good in our life, good."

D. 39, married 1st 2 years, current 6 years, 2 children from current marriage only (f) 4 and (m) 3, parents married 55 years, 3rd of 4 children, issue: "Trying to make sure

that the time I spend with my children is quality time, with both myself and my children receiving mutual gratification of the time spent together.”

R. 44, married 19 years, 2 children (f) 18 and (m) 14, father deceased, youngest of 2 children, issue: “To calm the constant fighting between my wife and 18 year old daughter.”

G. 40, married 14 years, 2 children, (f) 14 and (f) 11, parents married 56 years, 3rd of 4 children, issue: “Understanding growing up in the 21st century with kids and being 40 years old. I want to understand my family’s behavior.”

The group met a total of 9 times, one more than planned at the request of the group between December 2000 and February 2001. Each session was as planned, 90 minutes, but not weekly. There were 2 week-to-week breaks over the course of the process due to vacation schedules. The final session was a double session for 150 minutes. The group met in a conference room at the offices of Religion in American Life in Stamford, CT.

I took notes at each session (See **Appendix B**) and with verbal permission audio recorded the combined penultimate and part of the final sessions. These notes describe each session in some detail and the issues and responses raised. The transcriptions add additional specific content, which form the basis of the discussion below. While the detailed content of the process is contained outside the body of the main text of this work as an editorial choice, the *reader is encouraged to review the Appendices in detail as they reveal the full flavor of the process, the styles of the participants, the nuances of humor and affect, orientation toward religious issues, various psychological mechanisms at play*

and the dramatic articulation of many of the issues proposed as seminal in the principles described and applied in this project.

The results may first be summarized concisely in this way: What happened in this group process was complex, meaningful to the participants, instructive for both participants and other clinicians and clergy who may provide similar group experiences in the future, and revealing of so many aspects of the inner psychic landscapes of the men who generously gave of themselves during the discussions.

More specifically, there were 5 basic outcomes, which stand out when reviewing the whole corpus of material:

1. Sharing among these men led to an awareness that "they were not alone" in their struggles. "It was helpful to me to know that issues I am having are not unique," expressed one participant. This sentiment was strongly shared. It stands in contrast to the traditional authoritarian upbringing model, which would inhibit such sharing. Others expressed the great benefit in "listening" to the stories of others, not only as enabling a sense of greater empathy, but, for the simple growth aspect of "listening better." This reflects an emergence of an egalitarian quality in the group self-concept.
2. The participants expressed awareness that through sharing they were exposed to new ideas about fathering, marriage, and life in general. Some believed the process would lead to some concrete changes in behavior within the family. Others felt that such changes might occur over time and some felt no need to change at all while believing the process to be meaningful all the same. Some of the outstanding common themes expressed included:

- a. A desire to be more available to the family, i.e. making dates with spouses, play times with children and sharing in household chores with an increased degree of positive countenance.
- b. A willingness to reconsider their attitudes toward the "full-time" mother at home and try to be more responsive to their need for help in the home.
- c. A common concern that women do not appreciate the work of men "in the world," and the beginning of recognition that men often use work to avoid intimacy.
- d. A concern that the hurts they experienced from their own fathers would be re-enacted in their own relationships with their children.
- e. A recognition that fatherhood is both rewarding and extremely challenging.
- f. A growing sense of "mutual" support emerged in the group, which was tender and helpful.
- g. A discussion in depth about the traditional role of men as providers, problem solvers and deed-doers evoked great emotion.
- h. Recognition that there might be other models for manhood and fathering emerged. Specifically, the group talked at length about the need for men to develop the ability to "stay in the emotions," and react less to most situations from a "problem solving" mode. This strong impulse, almost automatic way of "problem focusing" was recognized as repetition of the behaviors of many of the group members' fathers. It underscores the

complex dynamics involved in differentiating from one's own father and the unconscious and conscious fears of such self-differentiation.

- i. Some of the men reported taking time to try and "hear their wives" and try to understand their feelings before rushing to problem solving.
 - j. A frustration was shared that while wives claim to want a stronger emotional involvement of their husbands in the family in general, when men try to respond to this need, these men felt that their wives often "don't know how to handle it when I get emotional."
 - k. The emotional expressions of some members regarding unfulfilled needs in life or feelings of "emptiness" were usually greeted by the group offering solution-based conversation.
 - l. Each participant shared their "story" with focus on the role of their own fathers in their upbringing and understanding of their own current fathering style. During this sharing there was great attention and focus and sincere empathy expressed to those who expressed sadness in their sharing.
 - m. The level of intimate sharing progressed in a growing fashion from the beginning. There was solidarity in this group, which enabled the participants to be very revealing, open and honest with each other.
3. The participants in this group were committed to a "limited group process." There was no interest in convening an ongoing Men's Support Group as life with children was described as time consuming, all encompassing and of first interest. While most of the participants spoke about wishing there was more

time for themselves and other "growth experiences" and lamented the loss of freedom, this was balanced with a desire to have more time with family. They felt this group was of great value, but that such a group would serve its purpose "intermittently," or "as needed." This aspect of the discussion underscored the proposition that men can be more attentive to their own families if they care properly for themselves.

4. There was positive feed back for the facilitator including recognition that the leader kept the group focused, encouraged discussion and guided individuals to reflect about their situations and emotions. There was appreciation expressed for creating a safe setting, which engendered trust and honesty.
5. The group demonstrated an ability to evolve from a collection of unconnected individuals into a group of fathers and men who learned something from one another about life and the struggles of fatherhood and manhood. Every participant expressed a sense of humility at one point or another about their own lives and sensitivity about the lives of others. There was strong resolution to try to be more aware of the need to acknowledge emotions, remember early losses and griefs as a natural part of a new way of being in the present. There emerged a hope to attain a more sensitive, open, calmer, emotionally available presentation of self in everyday life, and especially as father, husband and man in the world.

In summary, these men benefited from being able to give and receive support.

The advent of fatherhood does seem to initiate a reflection by men about their own

paternal role and it was shown that this reflection continues in later stages of fatherhood. The guided reflection shared by this group did enable the participants to delve into the meaning of fatherhood and various operative models of fatherhood and manhood which inform their behavior and attitudes.

Feelings surrounding fatherhood were reported including: A sense of loss related to the redistribution of affection and attention by the spouse; a loss of "being fathered" which is suddenly replaced with "being a father"; a loss of independence through the most basic and intense introduction of dependence in the new-born; and, a sense of isolation caused by the strong natural bonding of mother and child. The rise of these feelings were often perceived through the prism of the experience of the man's family of origin, particularly with respect to issues of separation and loss.

These men did not relate their own interest in this group to an awareness of women's identity activities. In fact this was never mentioned. There was, however, a desire by these men to join together simply to delve more freely into their emotionality and vulnerability as a means to greater well-being, self-acceptance and better relationships within the family itself. A central issue in this study was revealed in this aspect of their discussion: These men expressed the need to find more satisfaction in "being" themselves, rather than, "doing" as a way to cover up, "being."

While this group did provide a setting for Jewish men to gather, the participants expressed awareness of or interest in the Jewish aspect in limited ways. There was no consciousness that this was a unique Jewish experience or that it offered anything to the "fruitful non-defensive diversity" desired in liberal Jewish life. They saw the simple, secular value in men being together as men themselves for its pragmatic outcome. While

these men were working towards improving their daily lives and relationships, clear reflections of Jewish values, there was no measurable outcome regarding their sense of Jewish affiliation or identification, per se.

The group provided a safe group-sharing environment, which allowed men to affirm common experiences and express the emotional content around the experiences. This sharing was touching. Grief was identified by some and explored by others and in some cases new ways of being were considered and celebrated.

There were some transference and counter transference aspects to this experience. Members of the group turned to me as a rabbi on a few occasions to provide minimal "Jewish authority." In the final session questions were raised about the Jewish purpose of the group and whether or not those goals were even clearly expressed.

Especially with N., I felt feelings of annoyance and even frustration at his dominating the group at times and what felt to me as his inappropriate uses of humor and his "having it all so together." Those personal feelings are in part a reflection of my own insecurities as a father and my competitive feelings toward N. I recognized these feelings early on and worked with them to attempt to enable N. to also express some element of his own vulnerability. It was interesting to observe the group itself eventually respond to N. in a joking but pertinent manner. Expanded of discussion of the transference and counter transference issues is included below.

It turned out that this group clearly preferred the free-flowing group process and I was comfortable working in this manner. The meetings were lively and revealed content directly related to the project at hand. This was a source of confidence both in myself and in the group. When I asserted an "outside" structure or content component they were

resistant as when I suggested the composition of a group prayer for fatherhood and the sharing of it with spouses. They were more interested in continuing the talking transaction as an unfettered, open and honest being together and saw the ritual as an interference, as an artificial imposition of an activity which was only going to take time away from the honest, caring talking and being together.

Their resistance is an important point of discovery about the group's dynamics, the potential unconscious process emerging in the discussion, and the possible understandings of the transferential and counter transferential material. Resistance expressed itself in many ways in this group, some content explicit and other transferential. These include:

- A. The group "forgetting" the religious aspects of the process and the conversations about religious aspects of fatherhood presented at the outset and at other stages in the group.
- B. Veteran fathers "preaching" to the novices and in the case of N. in particular, presenting himself with a seamless façade of well being, having, "been through that," and "...reaching 50, I got my life in order. You will too. You'll see."
- C. The laughter, joking and "pluming" behaviors demonstrating an assertion of hierarchy, cleverness and wit as a means of drawing attention toward the individual personality and away from the issues and more importantly the emotions present in the room.

- D. Comments to the leader at certain moments of inquiry for facts, e.g. "Tell us what Judaism says about raising children," interestingly forgotten later on as having any religious content or significance.
- E. The non-reaction, flat, uncomfortable response to the suggestion that the group compose a liturgical expression of what was being discovered in the process. Their response came across with a sense of embarrassment, even an unspoken shame at the thought of such an exercise.
- F. The sudden coalescence of group behavior to adjourn the group and go home "to our wives and family" in response to W. being called home to assist his wife and child.

These aspects of resistance indicate that within this group process there was a successful eliciting of both conscious and unconscious process. The forgetting of the religious aspects of the process is interpreted in more detail below, but, it probably reveals the deep rootedness of the archetypal authoritarian father image and its role as a source of ambivalence.

The veteran fathers' preaching reflects a defensive posture, a form of avoidance of the very vulnerability, which would be the hallmark of the "Feeling Man." It was interesting that this was not challenged frontally by the other participants, but responded to with humor, sarcasm and sometimes deference, all a reenactment of some of the patterned behavior of coping many of the participants learned in the adaptation to the authoritarian ways of being of their own fathers.

The infusion of humor and jokes, the "pluming" behaviors seem to be a way of counteracting the discomfort associated with expressing sadness, fear and other negative feelings. It confirms the almost cliché like behavior of men who add the antidote of subterfuge at moments of intense emotional substance.

The rare, but noticeable times when members of the group turned to me with explicit questions regarding "religious tradition or authority" were revealing of the two sided dimension of authority: As men want to hold authority and assert it as a means of self protection, they also seek boundaries, yearn for certainty and moorings of truth. Religious tradition is both a source of authenticity and eccentricity in the minds of these men, and as the leader; I then become the container of what is a source of both comfort and ambivalence.

When his "upset wife" called W. home it uncovered an amazing array of transferences in the group and counter transferences in the leader. The group saw this as an "out." This was the week following G.'s deep expression of feelings of "emptiness." There appears to have been a "flight" from these deep emotions under the guise that, "We can all go home and put our actions where our mouths have been." The identified reason to adjourn, that is, to "walk the walk," so to speak, may very well be a dramatic example of group resistance clothed in the nobility of one of the set purposes of the group, viz. to enable man to become more available to their families. However, this reaction formation tells a story in itself of how men "act" in order to conform, rather than "be" and remain centered in the realm of feeling and, specifically, anxiety itself.

The counter transference in my own experience as leader is also important to review. The main theme content of these transactions include the following:

- A. At various times I felt unsure about how much of my own experience of fatherhood and being "unfathered" could comfortably be shared. At times, I also felt unsure about suggesting explicit religious material as an interference in the natural group process.
- B. There were moments when I realized that I was subtly eliciting affirmation of my leadership of the group, wanting them to reassure me that the group was meaningful and helpful.
- C. As the transference father I was not always sure how I was being experienced. In fact, at more than one point in the group process I wondered if they were talking to their own fathers through me, which made me feel uncomfortable.
- D. The fooling around and joking about me, especially at the introduction of the tape recorder, their making me "one of the guys," on tape was both endearing and frightening for me.
- E. The group adjournment in response to W.'s wife was jarring for me. I felt like I was losing the group's attention and interest at the time. Upon reflection, as described elsewhere in this study, I used these feelings to enhance my own sense of emotional strength and realized that my feelings about the group's abandonment was a reiteration of my own sadness about my father's repeated abandonment in my own life.

These various experiences hold important keys to understanding the group's process, the subjective counter transferences which are a reflection my own infantile reactions to the group members from my own issues and the objective counter

transferences which are the induced feelings of the group into the group facilitator which helps us get as pulse on where the group is in the process.

Specifically, my own experience of being "unfathered" led to resistance on my part toward the group members' interest in my own pain. Rather than be revealing, I held back, and in doing so, reflected along with the participants the tendency to act rather than feel. I was tempted at times to tell my own story, but rationalized within myself that this would, "get in the way" of the group's process. This counter transference is particularly important as it reveals subjective content, i.e. my continuing projection of "unacceptability" by my own father, and the converse anger at his "unacceptability," (which reflects the common polarity in neurotic conflict); and also objective content, i.e. an empirical manifestation/repetition of the group members' own struggle between free emotional sharing and the drive to solve problems or assert solutions. In the same way, my uncertainty about inserting specific religious content, stories and legends, my feelings of worry when I did present such materials suggests my own ambivalence about holding authority, of accepting the fatherly role, and in this context, initiating and embracing my role as the transference father.

While any group leader hopes for positive feedback from participants, my hope for such response had a neurotic quality at times. While this may not have been evident to the group, and I may be exaggerating the actual externalized manifestation of these feelings, upon reflection they were strongly felt by me. These feelings are reflective of the patterned male behavior, which thrives on the external approval of others for what is "done," or "accomplished." My need for approval by the group was for how the group was run, how the group was going, but not about my "feelings." Again, we see here, in

the group leader a mirroring of some of the resistances of the group members themselves, indications of just how entrenched are some of our male gender psychic habits.

At times, these men were speaking transferentially through me to their own fathers. When G. said, "Rob, you know all the answers. Why don't you just tell us how to be better fathers," the group laughed in affirmation of G.'s comment. It is a passing moment of misdirection, but it reveals deep process. G. told the group earlier on that he looked at his father as the "all knowing ruler of the family." It is no surprise that G. repeats this psychic interaction with me. It made me feel discomfort as it echoed against my own infantile yearning for the very "authoritarian" presence, which G. strives to understand and ultimately balance.

The joking and fooling around among the men was a very charming aspect of the experience. That assessment is counter transferential, however, as the digressions of fun were a source of momentary relief to me in the midst of some very intimate, painful and anxious sharing. I felt, "charmed," which is to say I felt, allayed and protected, if but for a moment. At times, the jokes were pointed expressions, containing hostility, as when one person commented, "Since we're on tape let's get Rob for the record," followed by, "Yeah, who's that woman you were with last night, Rob..." These comments made me feel both unsettled and embraced. Unsettled, because I wonder what fantasies these men have about me, as the leader, a rabbi and transferential father. But, it also expresses an endearing quality of acceptance of me as a peer.

There is for me a perpetual struggle in my role as pastor, rabbi, counselor and group leader concerning my acceptance of the differentiation which comes with the plinth of care giving, on the one hand, and the sense of purposefulness and fulfillment I

experience when empowered to impact on people's lives, on the other. This is part of a life long process of working through my own sense of competence and worthiness which derives largely from having to sort through the absence of my own father. Working with this group tested many of my own core issues and in the outcome, I recognize that I have done excellent work with my own self-esteem issues, moving through marked reaction formation in my years of upbringing, through various self-invalidating behaviors and now, in the heart of adulthood, recognizing my own power to be "fatherfull" to myself, to my child and to others. This group served to reinforce my belief that I have survived and evolved beyond my early ego injury and subsequent weakness. I accept now with mature acknowledgment there will always be residual emotional content of these formative experiences "coming up" throughout my life, which I will continue to strive to use as opportunities for deepening empathy and self-understanding, and perhaps, even wisdom.

The group's "adjournment" in response to W.'s call home was a fascinating development in the process. As mentioned, I was taken aback emotionally. In the midst of it, I was paralyzed to some degree, acceding to the group's wishes with little reaction. In retrospect, I understood this as a dramatic resistance to deepening the group process in the wake of G.'s dramatic admission of "emptiness," the prior week. It also points to the complex forces pulling on men, internally and externally. Men desire to guard the well-being of their families. When W. is called home for the illness of his daughter, it evokes this primitive genitive drive. That fact that this drive was elicited in the midst of a group of other men offers a unique insight into the dynamics of male nurturing behavior.

Upon hearing that his daughter wasn't feeling well, W. immediately excused himself with little fanfare. The group members were silent for a minute. At that point, D.,

another father of young children suggested, "When your kid is sick, that stands above everything else." The group nodded in agreement. At that moment, it was as if, every father in the room was transported to a memory of their own child being sick, and, even more importantly, memories of their own childhood experiences of being sick and the manner in which their own fathers behaved. This was not discussed by the group explicitly, though, D. alluded, "When I was a kid, my dad was the one from whom I could tell if things were serious or not." At that point, N. suggested that we all go home to our wives and families. There was a nod around the table. I felt that I could not intercede in this dynamic. It was good that these men felt deeply empathy and identification with W.'s situation. D.'s comment is most salient as it reveals poignantly that men, in fact, bring very meaningful emotional content into situations, whether we intend to or realize it or not. This is an important insight about the difference in how men and fathers are perceived and how they conceive themselves. The evolution of the Egalitarian Man would ideally include developing the awareness in men of the tacit emotionality they bring, encouraging the recognition and expression of these feelings and embracing ex post facto a new sense of emotional presence within their lives.

Lastly, by way of this descriptive report of outcomes, as in ministry in general there is value in groups, which allow people to discuss life transitions, this group provided a setting in which discussion of life passages was salient and productive. However, this group never seemed to become identified with a specific religious program or institution. Therefore, while a clinical alliance was established and a pastoral counseling process explained at the outset, these men resisted acknowledgement of the group's religious sponsorship or context. The meaning of this is discussed below.

As a final point, the group was a valuable event in the lives of the participants who seemed to grow both from the sharing that emerged as well as from the reflection and consideration of new behaviors, which become apparent.

Unanticipated Results: The fact that the group did not meet in a house of worship seems to have impacted the awareness that the process was one of Pastoral Counseling and allowed much of the religious content to remain in the background. However, as suggested above, the resistance to the explicit religious content may very well reveal the kernel of the challenge for men under study in this process: To understand more fully the authoritarian archetype (which has come down to men in large measure explicitly, but, also unconsciously derived from religious images and motifs) as both a source of strength and weakness and to discover and love both the vulnerability and the strength which this basic composite entails.

If men could come to accept the sadness and struggle involved in being powerful, the pains that flow from being strong, then they may discover a new meaning of strength. This meaning is one, which could then be integrated with a depth of feeling rooted in empathy, comforting concern, expression of emotion, and ultimately, more freedom. It is a feeling that they may grow beyond simply "acting" as father, but also attain a fullness of "being" a man, a "New Egalitarian Man," compelling in confidence and embracing of vulnerability at the same time.

It was indeed unanticipated that the very introduction of explicit religious content would become the focal point of resistance. And yet, this very special revelation underscores how deeply rooted are the many aspects of ambivalence these men feel about authority in and of itself and as a core of the fatherhood experience, as fathers and as sons.

In the end, the group did express a prayer, which actually brought into focus the hope to feel, the will to allow "being" together with "acting" and the sense that emotional

growth is possible. The planted seed of ritual may have actually been sprouted at the conclusion of the group with their expression of thanksgiving for the possibility of new ways of being.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The Implications of These Results: A basic question at the core of this project is: How do fathers become less authoritarian when our role models are so often authoritarian? This project first gives us insight into how authoritarian archetypes of fatherhood make their way into the minds of men. The group participants discussed the origins of their attitudes of fatherhood and manhood throughout the process.

Their own stories suggest that men learn from infancy on that there is value in the skill of emotional self-containment. Whether this is part of a natural development of healthy object relations, or a matter of drive management viz. reaction formation, boys seem to grow into men with the innate ability to "contain" emotion.

There is a developmental irony in this. While in the formative months and years of a boys life it is essential to learn how to manage the "being-without" feelings, irrespective of the stimulus of those feelings, that psychic skill of self-containment and self-nurturing may very well be the core of that very "uninteractive," "disconnected," "preoccupied" adult male psychic style. Ideally, self-containment is a positive behavioral quality in balance with the ability to be emotive and vulnerable. Men need to hold on to their natural inheritance of this psychic way of being as a fact of whom we are and learn its co-relative aspects. In fact, this mode of self-containment may be an offering men may make to women in modeling the development of women's gender well roundedness.

The implication of this is that men are raised in early life to be the very self-contained creatures that they are in later life, yet, that way of being, while a valuable skill in childhood, actually, left unbalanced, contributes to alienation and disassociation in adult relationships. This group process allowed that insight to surface among the participants. Each one come to a level of realization that "earlier ways of coping" with

emotion, or situations in general, for that matter, required rethinking and the acquisition of newer life and relating skills.

This group process also tells us about the nature of safe sharing. These men all reported that this was perhaps the first time they had ever shared their personal stories openly in a group of other men. The diversity of the manner in which different stories were shared and the array of personality styles revealed in the process of telling suggests that while there may be common structural aspects in how men deal with emotion, and common themes surrounding grief and loss, the uniqueness of each man's way of using language, image, metaphor and expression of emotional content reveals some of the most interesting aspects of this process..

The laughing as defense, the jokes as avoidance, the welling up and effort at self-containment, the high-fiving, the arms around shoulders, the smiles at seeing another see a new point of view, the palpable sense of common pain at just having to deal with life's grief...in these affective aspects of the experience are revealed moments of entry into new ways of being for these men.

In the world, these men reported that they never really operate "as themselves." Life forces men to take on roles, to carry certain airs, to proclaim certain company lines and to conform to corporate or community expectations, such that to simply feel that one is "being one's self" is a novel experience. There was recognition that men agree to take on these various roles in life. The discussion brought to light the possibility that a price is paid for being so quick in accepting these role expectations. But, even more importantly, the group arrived at awareness that there are also positive consequences for reconsidering the power of patterned external and internalized preconceptions of role conformity. In

this group with all that was shared, especially the emotional, affective and formerly private aspects of life, these men became "themselves," in a very powerful way. Being themselves now included both a degree of conformity to existing expectations, but also a new awareness of the freedom and possibilities associated with standing apart from the normative way of "manliness." There was recognition as the group progressed that in the group there was a special safety and acceptance from which flowed openness to new ways of being.

The sharing of stories of origin was a key in understanding the current roles as men and as fathers. This suggests that pastoral counseling in this context must work to enable men to tell their stories. The initial feeling of some that their stories would be "uninteresting," speaks to the uncertainty men feel that their stories are worthy of telling. This group exposed to the participants that their stories are not only important and meaningful, but serve as powerful starting points for beginning to learn new and unlearn old behaviors and attitudes.

Clarification of Religious Principles Raised in Chapter 2: It became clear from these men that the image of the father as a source of judgment and chastisement was a universal experience. However, the idea that their fathers could have been a "molder of a child's life" did not resonate with them. The hope that they could be the kind of "molder of life" the Bible suggests was an ideal shared by all. Children were not seen as a source of peace for the family. Rather, "shalom bayit" family peace, as an intended outcome of having children was seen as a very unhealthy way for married couples to proceed. There was recognition that some couples have children as a way of hoping to solve problems in the marital relationship. The so-called, "prince of peace" concept, was never explicitly described in the group. The participants expressed a desire to spare children the pressure of being the center of the family's life on the one hand, while being fully cared for and provided the tools for building strong self-esteem on the other.

In the telling of their own stories, these men spoke in terms, which resounded strongly with the story of Noah as a source of blessing and curse. There was recognition that as fathers they have the ability to bring blessing and curse to their children and families as a result of their own emotional behavior. All expressed the desire to be sources of blessing and avoiding of curse. But, more importantly, they became aware that the adding of curse into the family system can happen unintentionally, as the result of unconscious issues, unresolved pain from the past or quirks of the personality. Insight was gained into the fact that families operate as a "whole system" and that men talking and feeling more can help them from being containers of negativity within the system, or scapegoated within the system.

Most of these men were raised with fathers who reflected the Biblical authoritarian model in which feelings of compassion, expression of vulnerability, understanding of intentions in action and language, and interest in underlying emotional issues were generally absent. These men did not initially speak explicitly about balancing this experience in their own lives with a more "feminine model."

The story of the androgynous creation was shared and the reaction was one of passing interest, but, elicited little discussion. The implication of this is that some men are not strongly trained in the integration of archetypal stories as part of relearning new emotional ways of being. This also may suggest a threatening subject that the group did not explore, namely, that androgynous ideas contain bi-sexual content and are therefore, frightening either to those who are homophobic or simply irrelevant to others.

The discussions in this group highlighted the struggles men feel having to sacrifice various freedoms as a result of parenthood. This marks a focal point for religious interpretation of the group process. In Hebrew tradition, the word for "sacrifice," "korban" is derived from the root idea, "to come closer." This suggests that when one sacrifices, one comes closer to a sacred reality. In human relations, this could be extended to mean that in sacrificing for others, we come closer to them, but, more importantly, we come closer to our true selves, that is, an elevated, sacred self.

We live in a culture, which emphasizes what might be called, "negative becoming," based in worship of autonomy. Sacrifice creates positive becoming. It is important to recognize that these men are wrestling with this very issue. Hard work, loss of freedom and self-constraint have bad connotations in a culture that teases us to think autonomously at every turn, where entrepreneurship is the ticket to freedom. It is no

wonder that men feel pulled in so many emotional directions. Adulthood calls men to shift from self-absorption to embracing of sacrifice. The men in this group have described in various ways the challenge of living through this continuing process of maturation. It marks a core "bind" in the process of male coming of age in our time.

The "Binding of Isaac" may offer a helpful basis for interpretation here. Abraham is called to "sacrifice." He accepts. His willingness is interpreted as his badge of spiritual maturity. At first blush, it seems that Abraham is the one in the bind, a moral bind. Yet, he demonstrates insight that sacrifice is the "essence of fatherhood." So too, must the modern man come to this understanding. Later, Isaac must then confront the same "existential bind," as he comes to assume his own role as father. We see him, unlike Abraham, unable to rise to the call. Isaac is "blind" to the need of his son Esau, unwilling to sacrifice the duplicity in his family system in the service of a higher principle. Some fathers move through the bind of self-absorption into the sacred realm of self-sacrifice, like Abraham and others, do not, like Isaac. The existential bind which fatherhood presents, that is, the challenge to sacrifice, and in doing so come closer to a higher self and sacred way of being marks a moment for possible emotional and spiritual evolution of the man. The idea that a man would give his vision of autonomy over to something "in the future," to sacrifice his freedom in order to insure the bounded security of his family, that he could "see into the eyes of the future" when looking into the eyes of his children and know his higher self is a profound moment of holiness.

Sure, men suffer and need to learn to live in the center of emotion more freely. And, conjunctively, in balance, they must also learn to reframe the pain of life into a higher context. Men need to be bound not only to living in the emotions, but they need

also to bind others to a future, which preserves awareness of sacrifice as a sacred source of meaning and higher being.

Also, these men spoke at times about their struggles within the marital context. Men need to learn also how to talk about the comforts and blessings, which emanate from their marriages. When a man marries, the paradigm of his life changes. He is now fully involved in a "we." When a child is born, the paradigm changes again. He is now fully involved in a "they." Regarding each shift of paradigm these men tended to share their lamentations. These men spoke intensely about their wives lacking insight into the struggles men experience in the world. However, men would benefit from recognizing the bind mothers at home are in spending virtually all their time in the company of children. Being home with children is a raw, regressive experience. Women often feel stifled, smothered and even invisible in their full time roles as mothers. Children, by nature, breed regression in adults and consequently, fathers need to understand the predicament, the bind in which mothers find themselves.

Men, therefore have a major spiritual opportunity with the advent of fatherhood: First to see elevation in sacrifice and then to embrace their role as a source of access to adult consciousness for their wives who must live daily in the naturally regressive world of child-rearing. These new ways of spiritual being coupled with the psychological insights described below regarding how men benefit from being in the emotions provide a working paradigm for a progressive well-rounded male gender identity.

Clarification of Clinical Principles Raised in Chapter 2: It is clear that this group believed, in keeping with the suggestion of Wellisch (1957) that "emotional evolution" is desirable. This group of men talked at some length about the "genetic" aspects of fatherhood and it seemed by implication that to develop more emotive skills in fatherhood would be indicative of growth of the gender, even on a basic material level. Some of the participants believe that if they could change emotional patterns in their lives it would affect reality at the genetic level. But, more importantly, many of the participants hold the belief that evolving the emotional repertoire of men would reflect an improvement in the moral condition of families.

As stories were shared it became evident that these men experienced their fathers as described by Object Relations theorists, as a source of anxiety and "fear of the other." These men were somewhat oriented by experience to Winnicott's (1956) notion of layers of holding as these men all talked about how the mother takes care of the child up close, and the father takes care of them all, in the warmth of the safe home and against the dangers of a harsh world.

As the literature review above suggested, this group confirmed that in fact men do confront unexplored feelings upon entering fatherhood and that upbringing discouraged them from exploring these feelings. Not only did they feel it was worthwhile and challenging to work on these feelings, they felt it was essential for the well being of their children. Men's group therapy models have been useful in enabling men to express their inner feelings and to gain acceptance of those feelings and this was also true in this case.

Sharing of vulnerability in a group setting was a source of great insight about evolving possibilities for male gender identity and healing of old hurts associated with

being fathered. Sharing and discussion of positive models of fatherhood seemed to lead to greater emotional satisfaction and understanding by these men returning to their family systems leading to increased "shalom bayit," peace in the family. This conclusion is based on limited data received in the final session of the process.

These men reported being conditioned by society to respond to conflict within themselves and in the world outside with a solution oriented mechanism, which engenders maintenance of the emotional status quo. Upon recognition of these often self-defeating, skewed ways of being, men desire to learn new possibilities of relating.

These men also portrayed archetypal images of manhood, which reflect the powerful, genitive life force, as reflected in men's "sacred swagger." Yet, these men felt anxious about many aspects of life experience but were not taught how to manage or transform anxiety into creative relational behavior.

These men are convinced that they are primarily "problem solvers" and estimate their worthiness in the inventory of solutions rather than in the quality of relationships. This was one of the predominant themes throughout the process and one from which we may learn greatly about serving men in pastoral care and other clinical settings.

Specifically, men need to be reminded again and again about the reasons they are so apt of "repair" situations with concrete solutions and to consider alternative emotional responses. These men believe that they are conditioned to accept that power is in control of circumstances rather than in the possibility of trusting the providential nature of circumstance, or open-ended emotional presence.

These fathers truly wish to make a difference in their own families and are aware of the collectivity of fathers and their struggles to be connected to their children. They

feel subject to a "genetic, sociological and political wave" which bears down on men and keeps them from being better fathers. They feel like they are up against great forces both within themselves and in society with which they have to contend in the goal to be a "fatherfull father."

These fathers believe that their involvement in the lives of their children will have measurable, concrete positive impacts. To some degree, they feel empowered in this regard. Some of the fathers in this group are so committed to being there with their children in life they will weather troubled marriages. This of course, raises another dilemma. The statistics are not clear that the outcome for children with absent fathers is more compromised than for those children whose fathers remain in troubled marriages.

Contributions of This Project to Ministry in General: This project has shown that activities, which promote group process and dynamics for specific populations in the context of pastoral counseling are of significant value. In addition to the ritual, worship, didactic educational, social and reflective activities which emanate from religious communities, support groups convened by a trained pastoral counselor enable members of such constituencies to develop higher levels of solidarity, observe in others and then learn by imitation trusting behavior and possibly internalize and manifest new ways of being.

Since religious communities are built on the primary unit of the family, and they focus on children thorough education and indoctrination to local religious norms, the forming and carrying on of groups which directly address the conditions of fatherhood, motherhood, etc. provide significant foundational support not only for the daily health and well-being of families, but, by extension, the health and well being of the congregational family.

This project brought focus to many realities of family life, which exist simultaneously and are therefore a source of complexity, in need of extrapolation, understanding and, appropriate programs and interventions. Through this process, we have brought to light the primitive, archetypal patterns of gender being and discussed the psychic origins of these patterns, discussed them in a group and developed insight about their psychic power.

At the same time we have identified the current behaviors and patterns of thinking about fatherhood at the beginning of the 21st century with all of its attendant pressures

and fears. These have been discussed in the group with great sharing of concern and exchange of ideas about coping strategies.

Concurrent with these processes, the group has had its own process "in the room," out of which the participants have gained insight into their presentation of self. Such mirroring is of great values in the developing of ego-strength and is often a positive product of the group therapy process. This enables participants to understand more clearly how they are coming across or being perceived in the world. Such self-awareness can lead to developing more constructive styles of communication, interaction and relational well being.

Finally, this project proves once again that people need to test their sense of themselves and the manner in which they conduct their lives in the presence of other accepting, caring, honest people from whom they can derive better self awareness. This is in itself a significant offering which religious communities must provide as we work at so many various levels to enable the spiritual, psychological, physical and moral well being and integration of the person. It is my observation that this project offers a model for pursuing all of these goals in some modest measure for men at this stage of life.

Implications for Future Ministry: This group therapy process was successful for all of the many reasons described above. What has been learned in this project about the role of archetypes in psychic development, the operative power of early childhood experiences in the formation of male gender behavior, the value of sharing of personal stories for the cathartic effect of opening up in safety and the valuable transactions of ideas, coping strategies, emotional modeling and co-celebration among participants of the vitality and resilience of the human person, all are of true value.

This is, however, only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what could be done with a ministry with men. I envision a number of activities, which would continue this process of sharing the vulnerable and invulnerable male adult.

Activities which would bring the resources of prayer and worship to the fore as a means of challenging men to emote through these modalities is essential. Our traditions already possess tremendous symbolism of empowerment, e.g. images of God the Father with "an outstretched hand," and God as Redeemer suggest value in empathic strength. And as time goes on, more diverse non-sexist ritualization and worship content and liturgical means may emerge through which men may go more deeply into the archetypal sense of manhood. Through appropriate supplication men may visualize and pray the walk of emotional, vulnerable, powerful manhood. All if this would be offered in the service of reinforcing the image of the "New Egalitarian Man," or "The Feeling Man," the differentiated man who can embrace his feminine and masculine dimensions. This might entail special worship experiences for men utilizing the words of fathers reflecting about the work of fatherhood. It could include words of "ethical wills" written by fathers to their children, which express their hopes for the ethical future of their children, a

liturgical manner of expressing a positive ego-ideal for self-reflection and spiritual inheritance.

Augmentation of regular group meetings and worship activities with a retreat program for men would be a necessary aspect of this more complete ministry to men. Having conducted such retreats, I can report that these intensive "times away" allow men to talk, similarly as in the weekly group, but more intensely. At such events there can be creative times for drawing, painting and various artistic means of allowing men to express emotion. On retreat, time for quietude, walking, engaging in "male type, primitive activities," i.e. fire building can lead to fascinating levels of sharing.

A full ministry for fathers would also include activities bringing the families together under the rubrics of the ministry to share the "specialness" and the "boundaries" of the ministry on the one hand, and bring the family as beneficiary of the ministry into the process, on the other hand. While wives and children will understandably feel left out of a gender specific, multi-faceted ministry, effort must be made to include them and integrate the work of this ministry into the family life as a whole.

Do such specific ministries divide congregations detrimentally? This is a long-standing question. The human consciousness is both solitary and social. Since in congregational life we reject the solipsistic view of consciousness and hope to collect our consciousness in God, the serving of specific needs and groups with specific needs within a collective is not only needed, it is favorable. This is because such interest specific ministries, groups and activities help the community remain cognizant of the diversity of life and the fact that in life, all are works in process under the providential love of God.

However, the day often does come when an interest-based ministry becomes self-defeating. The group becomes too inner focused and can begin to lose sight of the larger community in which it lives. One of the great challenges of pastoral ministry with groups within a larger congregational ministry is for the religious leader to be sensitive to the nuances of group birth, growth, vitality, decline and death. As each individual must confront these aspects of the life cycle, so does the insightful pastor walk with the groups in his or her charge through these same stages of life.

Yalom (1965) reminds us, "that termination is more than the end of therapy." Coming now to the end of these discourses, I admit sadness and joy. The joy is plentiful. Each of the men in this group gave me a small piece of their lives to hold within my soul. Isn't that the gift for which we work, in a way, to take hold of some spiritual gift and carry it within ourselves so it may become given again to someone else who appears before us? The sadness is only a bit. I feel sad for I know that in order to build up life, we must also take life apart. I feel the sadness of the men who struggle. I feel the confusion of the men who try so hard and are unable to believe in their own adequacy. But, as a wise and sensitive mentor once said to me, "For men to say yes to the depth of their sadness and emotion means for them to also say yes to a new kind of manhood."

Most of all I feel that our work as pastoral counselors is a remarkable blending of empathy, insight and humility which are exposed in the sacred moments of sharing, the trusting which sprouts from seeds of hope and the growth witnessed. In all of this I feel truly blessed for having the privilege of living through the process as witness and yes, I realize, as participant, touched and also changed. As it says in the words of Psalm 145:18:

"God is near to all who call, to all who call in truth"

As this speaks of humanity and God, so too, person to person, man to man, woman to woman, child to child, child to parent, parent to child, sibling to sibling, husband to wife - may all who call in truth find the nearness of those to whom they call, as we were so blessed in this group of inquiring souls.

I also wish that the words of Malachi 3:23-24 will be true for all persons in relationship. For, it is as if Elijah was with us in our group, and hearts may very well have been changed. In this there is wonderful joy, satisfaction and hope. Thank You to God for the light of learning and for being an instrument for healing and growth, for my teachers and for my students all along the way. May the prophet's prayer come true:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, and he will turn the hearts of the parents to the children and the hearts of the children to the parents before the coming of the great and awesome day of God!"

Appendix A

The Verbatim by Transcript of Combined Sessions VIII and IX

Appendix A: The Verbatim by Transcript of Combined Sessions VIII and IX

Sessions VIII and IX were combined as planned. All arrived on time except W. This session was audio recorded and transcribed. It is included below as it contains a wealth of material which documents not only the actual transactions of this double session, but also adds clarity to the topics raised in the previous sessions as well.

In this report "M" refers to me as moderator and "R" refers to "respondents" who asked not to be identified by abbreviated first letter to further protect their anonymity:

M: Okay. So how is everybody?

R: Good.

R: All right.

R: Yes.

R: Hanging in there.

R: My wife bought me a new mood ring. When I'm in a good mood it turns green, when I'm in a bad mood it turns red and leaves a red mark across her forehead.

M: It's an interesting story.

R: The tape recorder is on.

M: Yes, the tape recorder is on.

R: Have you stopped beating your wife?

M: Of course I may – forced by circumstances – choose to edit certain things out. To protect the innocent of course...or the guilty as the case may be.

R: Since we're on tape let's get R. for the record.

R: Yeah, who's that woman you were with last night, R.? I'm bad.

M: You're bad.

R: I'm bad.

M: You're bad.

R: You're getting there.

M: You're on a roll.

R: When your trunk is tied down and you're not carrying anything. When do you know what's a Hindu? It lays eggs. (No Response by the group.)

M: Any thoughts about last week's discussion? Or anybody have anything to say? G. how about you?

R: Everything's fine.

M: G. We were thinking about you.

R: We were talking about G. Last time, you would express your desires about – you were saying, you know, how you wanted to speak to your wife.

G: Yes.

R: I had a real need to think about it. And I did think about what we talked about. Maybe the correct thing is more getting a handle on your daughters than yearning for a son. Switch around the thinking. Something you have and should make better – I'm not saying it's bad – but you can make better. And make that more fulfilling. However it is, dedicate more time to that. Dedicate – I don't know – it's just that the thought crossed my mind that you got two great kids. They're here. I don't know. But I thought about it. It was – I was thinking about that all week.

R: It's not what you don't have; it's what you have.

R: Yes.

M: He was talking about a feeling. Remember?

R: Yes.

M: Kind of an un-fillable emptiness that – at least at the beginning when you started talking about it – you said was, you thought maybe was a reflection of now having a son.

R: Right. It wasn't necessarily what I thought that – that was the answer. It was just an idea that I thought.

M: Yes.

R: And maybe could – just as an idea – could your relationship with your wife, whatever, with your daughters become enough for you?

M: Does anybody notice that when any one of the people in the group sort of presents a problem, we don't actually spend a lot of time living with the emotion of a problem. We want to give solutions. Is there any truth to that observation?

R: I didn't think about that at all, but as soon as you said it, it makes 100% sense, yes.

R: Very accurate.

M: I mean, as we've gone through this process –

R: Absolutely.

R: I think it goes back to something we had said in the earlier meetings about how men want to solve problems. We're problem solvers. So when situations arise where we're discussing within the group about there's something I really wish for inside, I really want to have, we end up trying to find a solution, rather than delve into the emotional aspect, how you're feeling.

R: Yes.

R: That's actually true because none of us realize that – well, I know we don't ask questions like: What would you feel like if? Or, What would you do with yourself?

R: Right. Exactly.

R: G. how really...are you – we didn't talk about how you're dealing with the emotion.

M: The immediate thing was –

R: You're absolutely right– yes.

M: He wants a solution. He expressed the emotion and went right to the solution.

R: Right.

M: And then we all seized it and said, "Hah, let's help him take his idea for solutions and try to make it happen." Interesting. Why do you think it's hard to live in the center of feelings? – That may be harder – I think it's hard for men to live in the emotions.

R: Maybe men don't want to. Why is it hard for them to?

M: Yes.

R: Because you want to solve it and you don't want to deal with the emotional aspect of it, is that what you're saying? Solve it so I don't have to deal with the emotional aspects?

M: Exactly, yes.

R: Is that what you were saying?

M: I'm asking. What do you think?

R: Oh, yes. Maybe that's it. Maybe we don't want to deal with the emotional aspect – it's too difficult.

R: Or maybe it goes to what you –

M: What do you mean too difficult?

R: You know, it's too difficult emotionally, physically, to deal with that.

M: Well, when you say too difficult, it's emotionally challenging, what is emotionally challenging about it? What's happening inside you, D. for example, when you hear G. expressing that emotion of that emptiness? And we have this automatic response to try to solve it, as opposed to –

R: Well, I must tell you, as we're discussing his quandary, I was not thinking about the emotional aspect of how he should deal with it. But, what does he need to – you know – do! I didn't come up with anything quite frankly, but what does he have to do to come up – to lead him on the path so he doesn't have this emotional problem –

M: So he doesn't have that feeling, exactly.

R: Quick solutions. We look to the quick solutions.

M: You just said something so clear I think, that when an emotion happens, we immediately want to try to, in a way, to get out of the emotion.

R: Yes.

M: Which is the solution, that is, not to emote. In other words, we hear that you're feeling empty and have a sense of an un-fillable void, and we're trained in a way to automatically undo being in that place. Maybe actually being in that place is where we need to be, more, and allow ourselves to be in those emotional places that are uncomfortable. That's one thing.

But even before we do that – it's really what I'm interested in – why? Why do you think men almost by – it's like automatic pilot – the emotion comes into the room or into the situation and we want to steer the emotion into a solution. And get the emotion to

become a non-emotion. I wonder why men do that. Because I think there's some – there's certainly some documented evidence to it, and I think it's come up in this group. We've seen it.

R: Like when my wife and I have disagreements, arguments, what have you – I kind of know, looking back on those, and how we handle it – she wants to talk about it. And I'm quite frankly many times more curt. I'm not willing to delve into the whole business. It's almost like, well, "Forget it, I don't want to talk about it," because that's a whole emotional bubble that you get entangled in. I just want to – like – move on. I am thinking: Where do we go from here?

M: Can you talk more about this emotional bubble – what's the emotional bubble to you?

R: Just discussing it, and you know, rehashing it – the problem. The problem, the disagreement, whatever it may be.

M: What does it make you feel?

R: It's probably just a – I mean, quite frankly, to think about it – it's really a negative on my part to handle something that was so important to her by trying to move on. As opposed to digging in your heels and finding out, get to the core of the problem, discuss it, and communicate. You know, I haven't read the book; *Men are from* – whatever *Men are From Mars and Women are from Venus*. I guess it has to do with women wanting to talk about things and being the communicators and men developing more understanding behavior.

M: Well, when you first become emotional between you and your wife, how does it make you feel?

R: I don't enjoy getting into those situations, quite frankly. And I realize that's – making our whole way of being together get screwed up. But the reality is that – it's a problem, we've got to deal with it. We've got to face things that well, depending upon what else is happening in my life will have an impact on my attention and how I handle our own rough situations. Whether it would be more for other family issues, trying to deal with this past year. I get preoccupied.

So I think that has an effect on to my wife; my interest in her probably doesn't appear, I don't give as fair a shake to the situation as I should. Being, I'm looking at this and telling myself and her: – get it over with, say two words, get it over with, and move on. Put the TV back on, watch my program, relax, let's talk about something fun. Let's not, you know hash and rehash. – I always find that many disagreements, arguments, stem from something which – may really be insignificant, and depending how emotionally involved you get in it, you know, just like any problem, you know, little problems become very big problems sometimes with emotions and egos. So that can be between business partners, family members, husbands and wives.

M: What would happen if you just stayed in the place of the emotion that was happening in the room, instead of trying to get back to your activity or solve the problem?

R: Yes. It's not – I said that as far as getting back to the TV, that was just my way of saying, leaving the problem and moving on. Because the right thing to do probably is to weather it. Is it the right thing – you know what, as my partner it's the right thing because if she wants to talk about it and discuss it, that's her way.

M: Could it be the right thing for you?

R: Could it be the right thing? I'm sure it could be. I'm not saying it never happens, but many times I just – I like to get those discussions over very quickly.

M: I wonder why.

R: Good question, I don't know.

M: I think it's a key question to the whole condition of men – it's a predicament for men.

R: I think it's a couple of things. One of them, I think it's genes, I think it's guys, partially. You're born with that extra little gene that makes you act that way. More so, as you're saying again, that you didn't need that thought. One of the things that they make clear in that from the time we start interacting with other humans at the ripe old age of six months, seven months, eight months. When you start dealing with them, boys are taught to win. And girls don't play those games. Girls compromise. They don't play any games where they have to win. Boys do. And that's just the way it's been forever.

M: But who says it has to stay that way?

R: You're right, it doesn't have to stay that way. But without anything that I can see that my wife and I are doing, or that the school – he's in preschool, he's three years old and he's in preschool – I don't think they're promoting anything. Because preschool is just go to the different stations and play. Well, here are the games that have the cars and the trucks – he has a lot – over there, excuse me, is a set up of a house with a kitchen and the this and the that. Well, when it's time to play, all the girls end up playing house. All the boys, "I'll race you with my car. Now I'll race my car."

And nobody's stopping the boys from playing with the girls, and nobody is stopping the girls from playing with the boys. And when they're encouraged, "Why don't

you go over there?" "Oh, I don't want to play THAT." There's no definitive end to that game.

M: Don't you think there's some sort of tie in to what you're saying, and our discussion last week about how society teaches men to provide?

R: But, who's teaching that? What I'm – that's not being taught, that's something the kids just migrated to. And I can't see it, I don't see who's teaching what. All the toys are in the room. The boys goes this way, the girls go that way.

R: As you're saying, it's more just genetic, that girls are predisposed to playing with dolls and all that stuff

R: Well, I think what happens is free disposition very early on. But then the mold is set, also, very early on. That if the boys gravitate to the game that there is a win or lose and a finite end to the game – they gravitate to that. The girls don't gravitate to that. "Let's play house, let's compromise. I want to be the mommy. No, you can be the mommy. Okay, you do this, I'll do that. Let's do it together." And then the mold is set in the first couple of months, and then that's the way we are. We go to business, we play to win. You don't play to compromise, you play to win.

When moms deal with the kids, they're compromising. When you deal – you, generically – you're there to win. In business, you're there to win. That's partially why, if you take that view, there's this glass ceiling. Because women aren't brought up trained to win and go for the throat. Because after I beat up my – the guy I'm in the meeting arguing with, and we're having this bitter argument across the table, we walk out of the room, "You want to go for a beer?" "Sure, let's go for beer." The argument took place in the room, you know, you win, you lose.

The baseball players, the football players, they're at each others' throats. But the guys on the other team – best friends – they quit and have a beer when the clock stops running on the field. Women can't understand that. They go: If I – if you and I argue, I'm not talking to you for weeks. You're not my friend– that's it. Either we have to get along or that's it. They don't understand the win and lose is a game and then go on with your life.

I think it's a gene – somehow or other that plugs in. I think it's hereditary when you start; it's a gene that's in us. But then the mold is set very, very early. Because, okay, yes you can play a win-lose game. Hey I like this, I like the idea, and I'm willing to take that risk. Well, the girls don't play it.

M: Well, let me see if I understand what you're saying. So therefore, men are always trying to solve and to move out of emotions because it is contrary to being superior, winning, coming out on top –

R: Yes.

M: Being ahead of the curve.

R: Yes. There's no win to emotions.

M: That's interesting. Does everybody agree with that?

R: I think it goes way, way back.

R: Just to finish that segment, you feel the way you feel. The way you feel is not right or wrong – it's the way you feel. And there's no win or lose.

M: I don't know, it seems like a lot of men would like to feel more. It sounds like your are saying basically that feeling is bad because – just by the way we react when we feel.

R: I think it goes way, way back.

R: I'm mostly neutral about feelings at all.

R: I just think that – I think it goes way, way back. I think that if you look at – I hate to bring this up, but if you look at cavemen. Cavemen were naturally solving problems all the time to survive, period. Period. I mean, solving the problems, finding fire, and solving the problem. Not getting eaten by the tiger that's outside. What do we do? What they did - Solving problems, and protecting what family they had.

R: Why would it be the men instead of the women?

R: Why would it be the men? I think because men are physically stronger and women are more nurturing. So I think that men naturally evolved into problem solvers. I mean, this is what we do, we solve problems. This is what we do. We don't have time for emotions; we're too busy solving problems. Let the women handle that part, and let the women be a little more nurturing and more caring. I'm not saying that it's right. Or that men can't be as nurturing and caring either, because there are lots of men out there who are. I just think that it's in our genes, it goes back to forever. Back to forever.

What we're about. Because, you know – and yes, in today's world, it is a bit of a dilemma. It's a dilemma because men are meant – in today's world, men have to take the more active role in parenting, take a more active role in emotional issues at home. I mean, it's just a whole different world. The things that we're solving problems about are our relationships. Whether it's business relationships or whether it's family relationships. So, men just naturally are problem solvers. And now, in this society, it's a dilemma. Not that it's bad to be a problem solver, there's nothing wrong with that, but then there's a lot

more that we could be doing. Isn't that – being involved in our family's emotional life as well. A lot of men just aren't.

When we grew up, I don't believe ...[laughs] – and I've heard you speak, and I've said it too, that in my house, my father was so busy being a problem solver that he had no time to be close with any of us. In your house you had a different situation, but you probably were very close – he was your family leader. I just somehow think that it goes back – way, way, back – you know, it's in our genes, really in our genes. We were designed this way. Why? I have no idea. Do I have an answer for that? I have no answer for that.

But I think the real dilemma is in the world that we live in today. In what our role is, how it's changed. How it is to be a man now

M: Would it surprise you to know that there's a tradition in the Bible and its interpretation about who men might be? It says that when God created human beings, that in fact the first human being was kind of a face of a man facing forward and the face of a woman facing backwards, headed backwards. And that in fact we were not created as male, at all, but in an androgynous way.

R: [Laughs]...Right after He invented the platypus. Had a couple of drinks the night before.

M: But, there is a tradition like that. It's a legendary tradition. I find it interesting. Because I feel like it challenges us to maybe look at whether we just missed some important parts of ourselves, that we were conditioned, and have to be a certain way as men. Or maybe because we're, we say it's because it's genetic or we say it's because it's

traditional or we say it's because it's society. What that really becomes is just a way to avoid finding out how to be fuller human beings.

W. enters late.

R: I don't think that we're not emotional. We just don't have the same patience that women have. I would hope that if you were in a situation where someone was crying, the answer isn't, "Stop crying now, let's move forward." That, "Oh, I'm sorry, here, let daddy give you a hug," and "Why are you crying." And now we'll fix it. There is emotion there. Just not at the same level. Don't make it black and white. It's not.

M: I don't mean it black and white. But I still want to go back to G. – he gave, I think a gift to the group when he really revealed himself and talked about an emotional yearning and a void, and I still – I'm still curious about why, as men, we don't want to be in that place – with him. We want to get him out – it's like the reaction was, it's like the song, "We gotta get out of this place." We got to get him out of that place, that's the immediate reaction. And I'm saying –

R: I'm telling you, if he gets a girlfriend, it will probably solve all the problems.

(Laughter)

M: There you go. But, I wonder why – I don't know – G. , I'd like to know more about what you feel like when you're in that place.

R: I feel emotionally drained, sad. But I go on. It's like I think about it and there's like – I feel like there's no solution, so I just drop it. I just – I don't dwell on the fact that I don't have a son. I could go have a son I suppose – it's just – I must go on, life goes on. So when I remind myself, or when I think about the fact that it would be nice to have a

son, I just go on. I just don't follow through. And try to find that solution, like we did here, as a group. I just drop it, and –

M: I wonder what that must feel like. I guess I have a void, I keep trying to fill it and it sometimes seems unfillable – that may be one of the messages being expressed in the group, that we all have times of feeling empty

R: It's difficult to explain the type of feeling. Sad. But then, like I said, it just, I must go on. And I get tight in my chest. So, I just start doing other things. Just do other things, whether it's watch TV, wash the car, do the lawn. Right away I try to fill it by doing something.

M: Anybody else have that feeling? That feeling that I can't fill, I don't know where it comes from, I don't know how to fill it?

R: I think I had a big hole for many years, and I didn't know what it was, it was everything. It's women, it's booze, and it's drugs. Nothing filled that hole.

R: I think a lot of people have this feeling. And thus go into drugs and alcohol and those kinds of things. Because they don't have – they don't – they have this big hole and they don't know how to fill it so they feel good by drinking or going out with women and – or drugs. So, they fill it with that, temporarily.

R: They try to fill it with that.

R: Temporarily, you're right.

R: Well, they do fill it, until they wake up the next day.

R: In terms of my marriage, I've been mourning my marriage now for about six months, and it's still getting progressively worse. There are ups and downs. One minute she thinks the world of me, and everything's okay, and then the next minute it's not. But

it goes like this. And I'm beginning to feel very lonely and I'm beginning to feel like there's a piece missing in my life. I feel not just sad, I feel empty, I feel lonely, I feel scared. I feel all those things. And it changes my way of thinking. I don't dwell on it, but I find that I lose focus. Sometimes the emotion takes over completely and I start to drown.

You know what I'm saying. The emotion takes over, and – not that it's uncontrollable, but then I try to keep my emotions at bay, but it's still there. And it still nags at me.

R: One difference I think – yeah, it hurts and I hear what's going on with your marriage – that what I experienced and what I'm sensing that G. is experiencing. He doesn't know why. See, I think you do have – you might not know why the relationship is moving apart, but I would think you're feeling this because it's moving apart. That's not the hole that I had – I had no clue what that hole was. Not a clue. And I don't think that G. has a clue. Talking about it, make suggestions, but I don't know what it is. I just don't know what it is.

M: I wonder if those feelings of emptiness – we may feel them in the present and in relation to existing circumstances. I wonder if in the hollow of those places, that's those haunting places, there isn't a collection of other hollow hurts.

R: Mine is all from my parents. I'll tell you that – I know that for a fact. It's all from my upbringing and where I was and things I didn't get as a child. I was looking for it all my life until I found it, but I didn't know what was looking for. And I didn't realize it then, what caused it.

I don't want to speak for other people, though I had so much therapy I could speak for hours. But it's all because of the – my upbringing and the lack of certain things. But I didn't know it till my life was nearly half way through.

R: Let me ask you something else. Just what you're talking about, about staying in that emotional place. Are we over-analyzing what goes on with this? If this were a group of women sitting here, having the same conversation, I don't believe that the group of women would not try to – if not solve the problem, suggest solutions to the problem.

You know, "Oh, I hate it when my husband does this." Or, "My husband isn't doing this." I think it's the same thing.

[All talk at once]

M: There are male qualities in women, too.

R: They have the same thing. Yes. They'd say, "Why do you feel that way, what do you think?" And then, boom, let's all give suggestions how to solve it.

R: Didn't we touch on – as we spoke about as being men we feel that we are the problem solvers, and we that we spend more time trying to – I mean, like I observed with G. talking about this, maybe a boy would solve his fulfillment thing. We were all just like, "Oh, well this is what you've got to do." Would women be the same? Would they be, "Oh, well, you've got to tell him, you've got to get laid right now, you know."

M: Do you think that, do you think that's what they do? I mean, I know as guys we – focus on the outcome, because every time, I hear everything, and all I do is think of solutions.

R: I have a solution. I think in non-mixed company, when it's only females together, I'm speculating, because obviously I'm not there, in mixed company though, it

depends. It depends on who you're dealing with, and the relationship. I mean, you know my wife –

M: Yes, I do.

R: We want to have a fight, let me tell you, it's a good fight. She and I stand that way and she won't give in any more than I will give in. She was a businessperson. She was a manager in the same corporation that I worked for and she had 35 direct reports, and dealt with that, and dealt with all the corporate issues and being in front of the face of the Vice President and fighting for the budget and fighting for this. I mean, she does not take a step back. She will meet you head on.

R: That turns me on.

R: That turns me on too, the power that's there. So, you know, it's hard for me to relate, not to that, because that's what I have. I didn't answer your question.

R: So, is it anything new?

R: I was just wondering one thing. What – assuming that we're problem solvers – a lot of times that can be a bone of contention. I know it is in my house, I'm sure it is in other of your homes and relationships. The question becomes: what is our role, and what do women want us to do – to not just solve the problem, but to take care of their emotional well being, by taking care of our emotional well being? I think that's the crux of the issue here.

M: Say more.

R: In other words, women like to talk. When women have problems, they want to talk about – when they want to tell you the thoughts, "it's dripping, we need to call a plumber," you have to go around the bedroom 16 times and then you have to go into the

other rooms and she has to tell you what's going on in there, 'til she finally gets to the point. I mean, it's just natural that you finally figure out what's going on – how do we become better listeners? How do we become more tolerant? How do we not say, "Well, what's the problem, come on, I want to solve it already?" Because I know that I get that way too. So what is it that we need to do? What is it that women expect from us? What is our role, these days, now, in modern times? What is it that we're doing wrong?

Are we programmed that way, and if we are, what can we do to change ourselves? Instead of just saying, "This is how we are, that's it, that's the bottom line."

M: They sound like good questions to me. And I think it's not just about being husbands, I think also it's how we are as men, it affects the nature in which our children experience us as fathers. Because if we're the problem solvers, we're looking at results all the time and we skip off the emotional block, and we're going to be problem solvers for our children. And problems skip off the emotional block rather than being in the center of our times with our kids is teaching them. Monkey see, monkey do. I think there probably are consequences when we skip off the emotional blocks whenever possible.

R: What do you mean by that, skip off the emotional blocks?

M: In other words, our child comes to us and they're really, really upset, and there's – and you know, at that moment, like, we really want them to be different, and to show a different kind of emotion. It's like – you take a kid in the store and you want the kid to pick out a toy and you've got five minutes to do it, and you have a certain idea of which toy is appropriate for your kid. But your kid goes and picks up the last toy you would approve of. And then, but the kid is all excited about the toy that's been chosen, and you sort of invalidate that the kid choosing that toy because it doesn't seem like the right toy.

And so you're so intense on getting in and out of the store, you're not really emotionally present when you relate to the child at all. You're just trying to solve the problem of buying a toy. And in the process, you really – you're giving your child a message in there that the child says to herself, "Gee, I guess I can't really be excited and happy about what I really believe makes me happy. Because daddy really doesn't approve of the toy that I chose. I really like it, but, wrong toy, wrong emotion. Have to feel sad, rushed, invalidated."

A girl goes and picks up a toy that's not really for a girl, or a boy goes and picks a toy that's not really for a boy, or whatever. And we just – we are wrapped up in an agenda to get in and out of the store and get the job done, that we don't pay attention to the emotion of the child going on while the job's happening. And so what we end up doing is, yes, we accomplish the task, but we blow the emotional opportunity.

[All talk at once]

R: You don't think your wife would do the same thing? You have five minutes to go in and out of the store?

M: Maybe, but –

R: No. I definitely –

M: I think it's less likely that my wife would do that.

R: I know that in my family, my wife would have a way of handling my children in the store that was more in line with meeting their emotional needs at that time. Because I know I would handle it just the way you were saying it right there.

M: I don't think that we are malicious when we do it, I think that we just don't know how to be there emotionally. It's a way of being which men aren't used to.

R: In my family, that's what my dad did. Emotionally, he wasn't there. But man – and we had everything we wanted, everything we needed we had – my old man took care of stuff. What I learned from that is that's my job. So I focus on making the mortgage, making sure the kids go to the schools that they want to go to. We have the toys they want to have. The wife drives what she wants to drive so that she feels safe.

But that's not enough any more. Because my wife is always hounding me for that emotional end of the package, which, I'm just – I'm not – I didn't learn how to do that. And even though – I mean, R., you said it four fucking times, they just want to be heard.. They just want to be heard. I can't get it through my friggin' skull – they just want to be heard.

So, not to focus in too much, but the point being, is that I feel now that my role is not just a provider. It's also this emotional supporter. And it's tough. It's tough. It's really tough. I mean, I know N. handles it no problem, but he's –

M: It's tough.

R: He's not one of us regular guys.

R: It's tough. It's like, you come home at the end of a workday and then you got your agenda that you want to accomplish in the house. Yes, you want to spend time with your kids, and you want to play, and you want to try to be available. But I find sometimes like I can just be semi-available. There's a part of me that just doesn't want to be – won't let myself be totally available. And then there's even a part of me that's looking at me saying, "You know what, you're not letting yourself be totally available." So it's like now there's two parts of me that's not totally available. There's the part that's not

available, and there's the part that's watching me not be available. So now there's two parts of me not being available.

R: Hey, man, you're halfway to being available.

R: Because I see myself not being available. I'm like, I'm not available, I don't want to be available.

[All talk at once]

R: So I do it. It's like I have half an hour now, I could pay the bills tonight. While my wife is putting our daughter to bed, I could pay six or eight bills at the computer and like that would be something really that I need to do. And I could get it done now. And then I start doing it, and she'll come in the room and she'll say, "Honey, it's time," and she doesn't mean for sex. "It's time for you, you know, to lie down with S. and be with us, family time before sleep." You know, which is a really special time in our family. But I, a lot of times, I'm like resistant to it because – and I know that when I'm resistant to it, I must be giving S. an awful message, which I don't mean to give her, but the message has got to be something like, "Daddy's just busy with other things." And the thing is, it's like – it scares me because I think she'll grow up and she's going to be a kid who's going to be busy with other things. Like the *Cat's in the Cradle* song.

How much of that is reality, and how much is that is my wife telling me that my kid needs my attention right now, or do you know if she's going to have all these hangs ups because I was so preoccupied. I don't know how much of that is actually reality.

M: Is it maybe not a question of hang-ups, it's just a question of they're going to become emotionally unconnected adults if they live with us as emotionally unconnected parents? I'm not sure that's a hang-up; it's just a way of being.

R: Yes, well, this could be the example too. And I know that when my father would do that to me, it didn't just – It started when we were young, but it carried through, and that's the scary part. The early experiences hold on even when we don't realize it.

M: He would "dis" you?

R: Not so much "dis" me, as not validate what was important to me. And it carries though; it carries through 'til you're out of the house or in college. There were so many moments that I remember that were like that. Not so much in the toy store as much as – I think I mentioned to you once before that once a year I had to do a summer theater program. Once a year, one night would be the show. My father could never make himself available to come see it and he thought it was a waste of my time. And things that were important to me that weren't important to him he didn't have time for.

And yes, if you carry that through, if you think about it now and realize this is what you're doing, that your child's emotion is just as important as what you're feeling. You have to let go at some point. In my father's generation, in our fathers' generation, I don't think you could ever do that – too busy making a living. Too busy supporting the family, as you said. Too busy solving the problems and providing. But I went through a lot of emotional turmoil over that issue. Over the issue of not validating my feelings. And I felt it's better, then, not to hide, it's better to let it out.

M: You see, we just all have the story from which we came, and it's – each story maybe provides every one of us those moments of truth where we suppressed our needs. And there's grief associated with those negative feelings that we have as children. We cover up our feelings caused by adults. We have to do that. And sometimes it happens from adults who are really malicious, and sometimes it happens from adults who don't

known any better and sometimes it happens from adults who are under duress, and sometimes it happens from adults who aren't even there.

But there's that moment in life when you suppress your needs, and there's a grief associated with that. And I think we do carry that through our lives, and I think men are conditioned to deal with those early feelings of grief in certain ways that we carry into society. And maybe there's something to be said for men looking at those earlier experiences of grief.

I'm thinking about – what were the emotional needs that we had to suck up because the appropriate people were not able – or willing – to supply what we needed. So, the purpose isn't to make them bad or wrong, but the purpose is to look how our coping shaped us into the kind of men we are. Because I think it will effect – in the story we all come from, we've all had to cope with certain kinds of sadness or grief, or an empty feeling that started somewhere way back, from some experience. And we've learned to cope, and I think we can learn new ways that draw upon other spiritual resources within ourselves that are ours to exceed the boundaries of those early coping mechanisms.

Again, my household, I came from a family where I never had to think about any kind of material need. The downside of that was that when I became an adult, I had no sense of what it meant to be responsible for someone else's material needs. So being a breadwinner, and what that meant, was a really hard transition for me. But now I'm so obsessed with being a bread winner – I feel that there's not a lot left of me after I get down to the business of bread winning. And it's pretty sad. I feel like a slave.

R: You hit upon something, you feel like a slave to the wrong stuff, to the wrong masters – a slave to the wrong masters. I call myself *Cinderfella* and my wife gets really angry with me. I understand what she's saying. The main, important thing here is what, without being selfish, what are we doing for ourselves. I said it before; we have to care for our own emotional well-being. And if my marriage is sliding, I mean, it takes, sliding downhill, it takes two people. I'm wondering when I stopped caring – not caring, I still care very deeply – when I stopped giving to my marriage. And I wonder when my wife stopped.

It's like – my wife works full time, too, so maybe we're both feeling the same thing. I feel like *Cinderfella*. I don't want to do eight hours of housework when I get home. My wife is the one to do eight hours of housework, and we've never found a really good compromise. As a guy, I guess from a guy's point of view, "leave me alone about that, I have other things I need to be doing." That's my first instinct. I don't want to talk about it, I don't want to hear about it, I don't want to know about it, and it takes a long time before I finally give in and do things that I know I should be contributing with.

Even small things. Because small things tend to end up to big things, and then after a while, you do, you'd say you'd fold the laundry tonight, and it's when you help do this thing, or you help do that thing. The thing that gets me is I'm worried that all these little small things are going to take away from what little time there finally is at the end of the evening for myself. So, R. when you said what you said about you're so obsessed in being a breadwinner and so obsessed with – or these feelings that you have about supporting your family – what's left in the end? Because slave to the habit, well, again, I

ask, and I'm not looking for a solution. I'm throwing it out on the table. What can we do to make ourselves better? Maybe could we make our relationships better .

M: G. you've been quiet for a while.

R: Well, I've been very quiet.

R: But you know what I'm saying?

M: I hear exactly what you're saying. You can only change yourself. The only person you have control over is yourself. You cannot change the other person. So, it's like – and forgives me, because I'm hearing this and I'm like it built up inside of me. It's like, get over it and move on and make things better. Don't change her, change you. It's that simple. It's that simple. Maybe it has to –

R: But it's not simple.

R: It's not. Maybe it has to do something with each person differently. And I know you guys are on my case because of my relationship, yadayadayada. I go home, I have my wife, I have my son. That's my life. That's what I've chosen. I have nothing else to do. When we left early last week, I went home and played with my son. Which is what I always do. It was no different in my house because we stopped early last week. My wife asked me, "Well, do you have anything on your agenda this weekend?" "No." That's the life I've chosen, and it works for me.

I don't have anything to do. I mean, I get my stuff done. You say about cleaning the house, I clean the house. I've got my jobs to do and I accomplish it during the week some of the time, then I come home. A lot of stuff, I clean the bathrooms. We only have two bathrooms. I clean the bathrooms. I don't do the laundry because I do this typical

male trick – you know, you throw in one red item with all the whites and you'll never do laundry again. So that's how you get around that one.

But the laundry comes up, I fold it. I might be watching TV and I'll fold the laundry. And my son might be playing on the floor, I'll fold the laundry. You'll get on my case for this one – I don't pay any bills. She does. I have no idea what's in my checkbook right now; I have no idea what's in savings right now. That's her job.

R: We're all broke.

R: There's nothing in the checking –

R: But you see, that's just a modern relationship. And maybe it's – I've been to a place I didn't want to be, and through a divorce and for my second wife, I wanted exactly the relationship – I looked for what I wanted. And I'll tell you, my first marriage, I got married when I was 24. I didn't know what I wanted.

And you get into deep shit when you don't know what you want– we stayed together for 18 years, not realizing this is not what I wanted. Once we were separated and got divorced, which is very painful. I mean, we both agreed it wasn't working; it's still very, very painful to go through. I don't know if you guys , you've been through a divorce, it's a painful thing, even if you think it's the right thing. And even if you both think it's the right thing. It's extremely painful. But damned if I was ever going to marry somebody who I didn't get all the qualities I was looking for. I'd rather be single than commit to what I didn't want.

And I'm not criticizing any of you. You've been married since you're a teenager, since 20. You're different now. You're different now. What was so – he's got this to do, this to do, this to do, this to do. I don't. Why? Didn't you want – and it's rhetorical, and

I'm not on your case, W. so, please don't take me wrong – but you wanted kids?

Shouldn't that be your life?

I haven't skied in a while. I'm a skier. I'd rather be with my son than go skiing, and I don't feel that he's taking it away from me. I chose – I wanted my son. And I'm not on your case, W. I mean, everybody's different.

M: How do you guys feel about where N. is coming from, in the context of our discussion, how do you feel?

R: He has a very mature attitude. I wish I could have it.

R: It's terrific.

R: Can I ask all of you – I'll be 50 this year. That's a big difference. My attitude now – my attitude when I was your age was probably somewhat similar. I want to do this, I want to do this, I want to do this. Now, at this stage in my life, it's my wife and my child, and I'll give anything else up. Anything, gladly. That's me, that's the stage of my life. And maybe it has to do that I've done that. I've done the skiing, I've done the basketball, I've done the this, I've done the that. I'm done. I'm satisfied.

R: That's something that would be great if everybody felt that way. Everybody wishes they felt like that, because it's a lot easier than the quandary. You know, you get home, you're torn between –

R: Sure.

R: I mean, a lot of times I get home, because I love my kid, but many times I get home and I just want some wind down time.

R: I'm with them, but like, your self, you're with them but you're not with them.

It's like, you're thinking, I want to do this or that and get something accomplished so that

I can relax later. I just go into the other room and have a beer and sit down and watch the news for an hour and then come back when you don't have a care left— It would be great if it was, if we could all feel like that. I just —

R: I'll make you guys hate me more, and then I'll shut up.

R: I don't think it's possible.

R: Okay. Here's my night. I get home from work and I change. My son usually comes upstairs to be with me when I'm changing. Come down, dinner's usually ready — my wife cooks. Okay. So dinner's ready. The three of us always sit down to the meal at the same time. When the meal is over, either I'll do the dishes or if she says, "Go play with him," then I have him. We play until about 7:30, 8:00. Bath time. The three of us go into the bathroom. She actually bathes him. I dry him, I bring him into his room, I dress him, I get his diaper on for the night, I get his blankie. We go back downstairs and we play some more. Now it's time for bed. It's 9:00 ish. I bring him upstairs. He sits in my lap; I read three, four, five books. He goes into his crib, I kiss him goodnight, and that's it. Now, it's time for me to be with my wife. That is what I choose. I am perfectly happy with that, and that's how I am raising him.

It's unusual. I agree it's unusual. This is my daily life. And I feel — I feel badly I'm here tonight. I'm missing putting him to sleep tonight.

R: When my kids were at that age, that is what my life was, and I loved every minute of it. I loved everything. I loved putting him to bed, I loved singing my daughter to sleep, I loved reading the books. But you know, the older I get, and as things, situations change, I'm finding that I want my life less complicated. That I want things to

be a little more simple. And I mean it – I'm tired after all these years of walking the dog every friggin' night.

It's like, let somebody else do it for once, and I meet resistance at every turn. It's like; life becomes complicated, so I envy the fact that your life now is where you want it to be. I just want things in my life to be simplified, just a little bit more simplified. Less stress, less complications. The older I get, the more that I yearn for that.

M: Give me an example of what you mean, what in your mind simplifying would be.

R: What simplified would be?

M: Just one example of something that would –

R: Not coming home and immediately being confronted by my two teenagers and my wife. Confronted immediately. Let me have my time, and then we can sit and talk. Once I'm in the door– you know, I don't want to be bombarded right away. I don't want to have to be the – like I said – a kid, but every night I walk the dog. Every single night, except tonight because I'm here, so my wife took him. But every single night, there's no equality. There's no equal choice in my house.

Either – I find that there's so much to do, so many things to do, that when time comes for myself, that's at a premium, because there's hardly any left. Hardly any time left. So, I'm beginning to reach a point where I want more time for myself.

R: So, do you like this evening, since it's a getaway?

R: Well, I enjoy this evening very much, because I'm able to express those things that I feel.

R: I mean outside of what, you're giving up, but just the fact that you don't have to go home and be confronted with the issues and the kids. And this is like a wind down time here?

R: It's a wind down time, yes, it is. I used to – the other things I did for myself, was I joined Sports Plex. Two, three times a week. And I'd be stress free by the time I'm done working out, have done the ski machine, hit the shower. But now, the only thing you want to talk about is chores. After some time to collect myself, I can handle it now.

R: Okay, so?

R: Except for what happened was, what would start to happen, was when my son joined the wrestling team, suddenly there's a new schedule. I have to pick him up at five, I have to drive to his paper route, I have to do this, I have to do that. By the time I'm ready to get to the gym, it's 8:30, 9:00, the gym closes at 10:00. You know, it gets to be a drag.

When did life become so complicated? I got married at 24, too, and I'm sure that when I got married, my priorities then are different than my priorities now. How I look at things as different, than then. I went into my marriage very naive, I think. I don't know what I was expecting, what I wanted. And now that I'm older and know what I want – it's like, no wonder my marriage is like –

R: Just growing apart. That's what happened in mine. Just moved apart. I went this way, she went that way. The car went that way, the house went that way. True – it's true.

R: I was talking to my best friend today. Married a girl that we knew from the time we were in sixth grade. They had two kids and got divorced. And their youngest was only

about a year or two. And, he's got the life. He's dating a 22-year-old model now. He's just got one thing, a good-looking girl and a good-looking little girl.

R: Do you think that's the right thing?

R: Yes, I was just going to say that – that's life?

R: What the hell are those kids going to do?

R: If it works for him, that's fine. But –

R: Well, they have a very unique deal. He and his wife – he and his divorced wife have a very unique situation. They actually split up in the best of terms from each other. The kids are in the same school district. They split the time, they get along.

R: But wait, N. how old were your children when you – You were married 22 years, how old were your children at the time you got divorced?

N: My daughter was two.

R: Your daughter was only two when you got divorced?

R: We waited twelve years.

R: I assumed she was already a teenager.

R: No, we waited twelve years before we had our first child. Again, it was, we want to do this, we want to do this, we want to do this, we want to do that. She was working, I'm working, career first.

R: How did you deal with that?

R: It was the hardest thing. I was living at the time in Yorktown, in New York. And when I got divorced, I took an apartment in Peekskill, which I guess distance-wise was only about six miles. And then I would see her during the week, once or twice, and every other weekend I'd actually take her for a weekend. I had a separate bedroom in my

apartment for her. It was fine. It was extremely hard, and looking back I wish it were different, but the divorce was still the right thing. Because she would have grown up in a house with arguments, with no demonstrative love of any sort. Not a kiss hello, not a hug, not a pinch here, not mommy tickling daddy, daddy tickling mommy. You know, just none of that.

R: Hostile environment.

R: Yes, very hostile. You walk in, you could cut it with a knife. So as tough as it is, it was still better, in my opinion to this day, it was still the right thing to do, and it was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I guess when my daughter was about four or five, they moved up to Patterson New York, which is above Brewster. I was there for a couple of years, and then my ex finally remarried and they live in Danbury now. My daughter's going to be 16 this year. My son, who lives with me, is 3.

I don't knock anybody else for what they have. I know what I have. I'm very fortunate, and I know I'm very fortunate to find it. I mean, I hear what goes on, but my relationship is – I can only say we're equals. We are absolutely equals.

R: I wish I was equal.

R: You pay the bill, or I pay the bill. You go call the plumber, or I'll call the plumber. If she gets stuck on the road, she's not going to call me, she'll call a garage. And then she'll tell me later on, "Oh, you know what happened, I got stuck on the road, I called so and so, this, it cost me \$300, but that's the way it is." "Okay."

R: I'd kill her.

R: Why?

R: 300 bucks! I'd be like, call me.

R: And what would you do? You'd call the garage, and say, "Tow the thing," and you'd pay 300 bucks, but you did it, rather than she.

R: That's right.

R: And, I'm just telling you where I'm coming from. My relationship, from what I hear you guys, is just so different. It's just so different.

R: In my house, we have an equal relationship, but it's George Orwell, some are more equal than others.

R: Don't get me wrong. We have our arguments, and when we have arguments they're doozies. They really are. Because you've got two very strong people. They're really tough arguments. And sometimes they're emotional, sometimes the root of the argument was a stupid nothing, but one thing that we learned early on, and really she taught me, to be very honest – which is fighting. Nothing else. This is a fight, it's just part of the relationship. When we're done arguing, hey we still can be a little bit pissed, but we still sleep together, and the next day we're still together and I love her and she loves me, and that was an argument. We're done. We argued. We're done. Let's move on.

And sometimes the answer, or the resolution to it, is we disagree. She wants my son to do this; I want my son to do that. She can't sway me. I can't sway her. So we agree that we disagree. What are you going to do? Next.

There are a few moments of silence in the room.

M: What thoughts are running through your minds?

R: They all want to strangle me, that's what's running –

R: That's funny.

R: You know, I mean, R., I even hear you say that – you know, the breadwinner. To what extent? We all want to make money. We all want to provide.

R: I'm done providing at 5:00. I'm done providing at 5:30. You know what I'm saying? I'm done working. Now I do my next job. And then at 8:00 the next morning, actually 7:30 the next morning, I'm providing again. There I am.

R: Right.

R: And when I come home, I'm done. I'm done providing. I turn it off like that, I know what you're saying, I understand what you're saying. I'm done providing now, that's the point. I did my job, I worked, now let's go home and do whatever.

R: I guess I'm not understanding – and maybe it's because of where I am – when you go home, what's there to do at home. I agree, we need to pay bills. What else do you have to do?

R: It's not a question of what you have to do; it's what you don't want to do.

[All talk at once]

R: When I come home, I don't want necessarily want to be the emotional – what was the term –

R: Helping our spouses with their emotional –

R: I know what you're saying.

R: What's the emotional requirement? Listening to what went on during the day? I mean, my wife says I never listen to her; at least that's what I think she said.

R: I think that we all feel the same way. That at the end of the day we want to go home and when we get home, that's our place to unwind, that's our place to play. That's our place to do the things that we like to do.

R: Do you think your wife deserves that time to unwind or do the things that she likes to do?

R: Absolutely. I keep telling her that, I keep saying that. Then she comes back with, "Well then, how will anything get done?" I said, "That's what weekends are for. We have someone who comes and cleans once every other week. We do the laundry regularly; we do these things. Why do you get angry when I suggest that let's just not do anything one evening? After supper, let's go a movie, let's watch a movie, let's spend some time with the kids, let's play a board game, let's do something that just helps us all unwind." And it's a struggle in my house.

Maybe you're lucky in the sense that you have it down. Plus you have a young child, so it's a little bit different. Like I said, with my –

R: Teenagers are different.

R: Yes.

R: Do you feel that your wife deserves to unwind as much as you do when you walk in the door? Like, you walk in the door, and whatever time it is, it's 6:00. Do you, you might have the mind set to say to your wife, "Okay, honey, you're off."

R: D. said it the best. D. was the best I've heard said, which was, all in these words, "I know my wife's job is harder than mine, taking care of those kids." I understand she needs a break. But my job's pretty fucking hard, too. So when I walk in the door at 6:00 and she goes like this, "They're yours," I have a hard time with that. I have a hard time with that. Because, yes, my job is not as hard as what she's been dealing with, but it's not a walk in the park. So, no I think she does have to find a way to unwind, but – And she does have to find a way to make a little time. But I have somebody I pay to come in and

clean my house. I have some one who watches my kids part of the day. So what does she do?

R: What the hell does she do all day?

R: She runs around like fucking crazy, doing this for the kid and that for the kid. What DO they do, D.? They do it, they're doing something. What the fuck are they doing? I don't know, but they're not unwinding. I can't speak for you or you, but I know that mine's not unwinding during the day, because when I get home –

R: It was more my point that I walk in the door, it's both our times to unwind. Well, obviously there's a conflict there. Because we're both – maybe if we could work together, it would possibly work a little better, but she's looking at me like, "Here, this is what you've got to do now." And I'm looking at her like, "Man, I just want to chill out."

R: And I guess that's back down to what R. is saying, emotional, that this is the point where you have to sit down – not then and there. When the kids are asleep, when it's there, when you talk about the issues – not at the time of the issue. Because at the time that it happens is the wrong time to talk about it. You talk about it some other time, when you're less emotional about it, than the issue. But then, how do we work on this?

I'm going to come home. I'm tired. I deserve time off. You're tired. You deserve time off. How do we work this out? Because otherwise, you're just going like this, and resentment sets in, and it gets worse, and it gets worse, and it gets worse.

M: G., where are you in all this?

R: Well, I'm very comfortable. I have a wonderful wife, and we understand each other. When I come home, I take my own my time, so. She knows that she's not going to

get what she wants, she can't come and say – she does sometimes, but most of the time, 99% of the time, she just can't say, "Here are the kids." Although my kids, now, because of their age, they take care of themselves. But there's no way. When I come home, I just do my thing. You know, hop on top of the house, do the lawn, little things like that.

Gardening that distracts me from my eight-hour job.

Because I'm really busy with her. When I get home, I do get busy. When I get home, as soon as I get home, I change and relax for at least a half hour. I'll just close my eyes, relax, make believe I'm sleeping. I meditate. A half-hour; nobody bothers me. Then I get up and watch some TV, go on down, and then we do things. She does it, pick up the kids, drop the kids off, pick one up, drop another one off, go to the school fair, the school drama, and the school this or that. But – and those things I do with her. With her, which is – we drive together, here, there, everywhere. We do them jointly.

M: It sounds like you're happy. You're comfortable with it. It sounds like that works.

R: It doesn't sound like W. is happy with what he has.

R: I'm hearing that you want it better. Do you want it different?

R: Yes. I want it better. If that means it has to be different –

R: Are you willing to give up? You have to give something up, because obviously there aren't enough hours in the day. And it's a rhetorical question.

R: What is there to give up? I try to think, like, what is it that I could do, other than being a more supportive of her emotional needs. You say you get home, and you got to do this, you got to do that – what are you doing? Your routine, just like everyone else.

R: But the routine used to be – what I'm hearing – you're not happy with the routine. He's happy with his routine, and I'm happy with my routine. D., I don't know your routine, but are you happy with your routine?

D: Yes, for the most part. I know what I have to do— basically, sometimes I get home, and as I said, I don't have a chance to unwind. As much as I love being with the kids, sometimes it's a little overwhelming. But the key is to – and not out of selfish reasons, actually, but for your own self-respect, so you are better when you are with those children. So the children are respected children, and so we're not with them but we are with them, as to make some time for yourself. So that you don't feel that you never get a chance to unwind.

Whereas if you went to the gym after work twice a week, or did something twice a week, then those other nights you would be a hell of a lot better with your children and wouldn't feel like – I never get to be close. There's a routine and the days just mesh into each other, you never get a chance to unwind. Because if you broke it up a little, you would feel altogether better.

R: I mean like tonight, okay, tonight is your night. And maybe another night could be her night, and then another night is together. And it just breaks up the routine. And I can agree with what D. is saying, that by doing this every single night like that, there's no relief. Whereas, take one full night all to yourself, or two. Let her take one full night all to herself.

R: Do as much for yourself as for her.

R: So you come home and you know that tonight, no matter how tired you are, you've got the kids from the moment you walk in the door. That's it.

M: We're back to problem solving.

R: That's true.

R: That's okay.

R: If you say supporting the emotions, we're talking with W. W.'s being very up front, very honest with the way he feels. We can hear him. I can empathize with him. At one point in my life I was there. Okay, and I can say, "Well, how do you feel, he's expressed how he felt," and I'm just talking from the real male point of view. Or even now, "I'm going to shut up, and I'm glad you have your problem, I'm glad you're happy with your problem," or "Let's talk about it." How do you think? I want to solve your problem. But by talking it out, maybe you can solve your problem.

M: O.K. Let's take a break for about 20 minutes, stretch our legs and come back and we'll bring our group to a close. I'll see you in a few.

Session IX was continuation of Session VIII. There was a 20-minute break between the sessions. The session was recorded and transcribed below:

M: So, tonight's our last session. We're going to bring this to a conclusion.

R: Here we are.

M: How do you guys feel about this being our last session?

R: Well, in one way I'm glad it's our last session. Let's get right into it. It's – I think it has something to do with something we talked about last week, which was, in terms of routine. We have such a routine, my wife and I that making these meetings has been a big pain in the ass. It's really thrown our – what's that term you use when –

R: Monkey wrench?

R: Into the gears, or?

R: Yes.

R: You know, so it's funny, because we talked about, "I should have one night to do this, and she should have one night to do that." The way our system is set up now, just the smallest deviation creates a tremendous level of tension

M: Have there been any benefits from our coming to this meeting?

R: The idea was that I was supposed to be home early so that I could spend some time with the kids, because I was not going to be around in the evening. But of course, my work doesn't work like that. I had to make a stop, so I didn't get home until my regular time, which is 6:15 or 6:30, so. I pretty much – it was pretty much a hit and run. I got home, and washed the kids down, threw them around, dropped J. off the bed on her head, argh, what a friggin' nightmare that was. Then I left them screaming and came here. They were all crying when I left.

M: I'm glad we'll be relieving you of the burdens that have been created by this. Has the group been of any value?

R: Yes, it has. It has, and when I was saying that it was a pain in the ass, I'm saying because what it created on my home front to make the time to come, but I enjoyed coming, and talking about these things.

M: How do the rest of you feel about this being the last meeting?

R: That's not really important, is it?

M: What?

R: I thought that now that I've said how I feel, can I leave?

R: You didn't have to be here at all.

M: How do the rest of you feel?

R: Well, in a way I'm glad this is our last meeting. It's been very educational, very interesting to hear other peoples' personal comments, lifestyles, needs, that type of thing. It has taught me, I think, a lot about what – in general, parenting – what I should be doing as a father and it has also taught me to think out what the problems that I'm carrying, or that I may have, instead of just running to a quick solution. So, I think it's been very helpful.

R: So, why are you – I'm saying that I was kind of happy this was our last session because what a pain in the ass it created for me on my home front. Why are you happy? What I'm getting at is, was our life – are you also – was it like a pain in the ass for you to be here?

R: No. I don't know if you recall, but when R. was saying, you know, what day do you guys want to meet, and do you want to meet Tuesdays, some one would always say, "Well, I can't Tuesday, I can't Wednesday." I was pretty much happy with whatever day we were going to meet. So I don't have a problem other than, I guess other than the fact that I think I would rather be home, getting ready for the next day. Not because I don't have the time, because my life is really pretty simple. Come home from work and just do stuff with the kids, with the wife.

I don't have to – it's not pressured like it is during the first eight hours of the day. It's a wind down time. It's a fun time for me, after 5:00.

M: How about the rest of you? How do you feel about the fact that this is our last meeting? This group will now only be a memory.

R: I like the idea of getting out of the house, being with some other guys, which I don't often have the opportunity to do. I'm torn, because as I've been, said, with my lifestyle, is like, I could be with my son right now, doing something else. It causes zero conflicts. When we started this, R. had asked the question, "What was your wife's reaction to you coming here for the meeting," and everybody had their own story. And my wife's reaction was, "Hope you have something good to eat."

So, no conflict. But how do I feel about now coming here? I like the – just being with another group of guys. So I'm going to miss that. But, it's similar to G. that – You know, I had no problem being at home. I mean it's fine, either way. I have no strong opinion, good or bad. But I definitely enjoyed this. Knowing, here, how other people have to deal with things, and see that just, the difference in lifestyles, the difference in ages, and the difference in background. You talked about your father. We talked about family, we all talked about parents and craziness and things that are going on.

R: From my point of view, I think it was good. That we all got together and everyone talked. In many ways it's nicer that a group of guys who pretty much didn't know each other before we started, were willing to not only go through the process, and I was willing to go through the process, but to get to know each other a little bit. And I think that it was very helpful in many ways to see different perspectives of similar problems and similar situations.

I felt that I personally got a lot out of it. And when you're talking about having your time, my time, it was very valuable that way. It was fun and it relaxed me. Not only relaxing, but exhilarating when we really get going, and we really shoot from the hip, that you should try this, or let's talk about this, it's exciting .

R: Once we get into the problem solving.

M: That's what we do, huh?.

R: That's what us guys are, problem solvers. Yes, and that and a bottle of beer and hell, we're happy as hell.

R: That's good. I like that one.

R: Nah, you're missing the remote. You need the remote.

R: The remote, that's right. I need the remote.

R: But I found it very valuable. It really put a lot of things in perspective, having, generally talking over things. I don't think that G. was relaxed.

R: I enjoyed the sessions – just getting together, chatting. Each of us being ourselves and being willing to speak and listen to other people's good and bad. Certainly that's a new learning experience. It was just nice, the comradery. I like to sit down with other people, and listen to what they have to say.

M: When we started, I asked all of you to identify one particular thing you might like to work on – a current challenge that exists. Do you remember what it was that you put down? That you wrote? Does anybody remember? Do you remember what you wrote? You don't have to say, it was private.

R: Yes, I do, I do remember what I wrote.

R: Did I write something down?

R: That was a long time ago, huh?

R: It was.

M: You wrote down, a current challenge. Do you feel that going through this experience in any way gave you some new ideas or new tools in addressing that specific goal you might have had in mind when you started?

R: I'd say no, because I forgot about this. I really forgot about this.

R: I did also.

R: Mine was – the current issue was the discipline of my kids, and how my wife and I are dealing with how we're going to discipline them, try to keep our little people from becoming close to spoiled brats. And we touched on some things. I think –

R: Dropping them on their head on the bed –

R: And that was very helpful?

M: D., did this process help you in any way? Is there something you identified when you started?

R: You know, I'm going to tell you, I don't even remember writing it down, but it's interesting.

R: What was your –

R: Trying to make sure that the time I spend with my children is quality time, with both children and myself it's a mutual gratification of time spent together. That's a problem that we were – no, it's basically what you had said. It's like when you're with S. and you're with her, but you're not with her, you've got your things on your mind, and it's not quality time. It should be. I have that same problem that you have.

M: Is there anything anybody in the group who would like to say to someone else in the group anything about what's come up over the weeks, months, actually, that we've been at this? Is there anything you'd like to say to someone at the table, a parting shot?

R: What was the original reason that you invited us here? If I remember what you said – I'm not going to say it – I don't know if we accomplished what you asked us to do in coming to begin with.

M: I'm going to spend some time analyzing that. But, would you like me to give you my impression?

R: Sure.

M: Our goal was to – actually, I'm going to read you the goal, exactly as it's defined.

R: You mean, you're actually doing something here?

M: Oh yes. The project was to specifically explore the changing role of men in the family with the introduction of children with the following goals: The primary goal is to provide a safe group sharing environment which will allow men to affirm common experiences, express the emotional content around those experiences and identify and own grief in order to celebrate their real selves.

R: Did you just write that, like five minutes ago?

M: No. I wrote this about six months ago when I conceived this project. And, in my opinion, that – everything I just said was accomplished.

R: I should say so.

M: I'll go now and analyze and reflect: Did we create a safe group-sharing environment, and how did that happen? Did we affirm common experiences? What were they? Did we express emotional content around the experiences? If so, what was that content? Did we identify and own grief at all in our sharing, and what was it? And did the

owning and identifying of that grief in any way help us celebrate our real selves more effectively? I'm going to try to analyze that.

R: Do you have to be a rabbi to use the word "celebrate" like that, in that context?

M: Anybody can celebrate any aspect of life.

R: No, I don't mean actually celebrate. I mean use the word in that way, outside of a religious ritual?

M: Celebrate our real selves?

R: Yes.

M: Yes, I think that's a real operative word in life. Like, I celebrate my kid who did well, had a good day. I say to S. and it's not just a rabbinic word, "Ah, S., let's celebrate that, let's celebrate that." She says, "Daddy, I shared something. I was able to share with S. today." And I say, "S. that's great. Let's celebrate that."

R: Right.

M: Celebration, I use that – that's a biggie for me – I use that theme a lot in life.

R: It's a good word.

M: That is specifically what the goal of the group was.

R: I guess where I'm coming from, I missed it, and sometimes I'm very thick. I didn't know that was our goal. I thought the goal was something to do with how religion, or the teachings that went into how we're formed. Where did I get that from?

R: That's your own project.

R: I don't remember him stating that, did he?

M: I never said that. Maybe you assume because I'm a rabbi –

R: Because W. is saying he wasn't sure of the goal of the group.

R: It's the first time I've heard it, too.

M: But this was written before the group started.

R: But you never gave us the goal.

R: Right.

M: Well, I described it in a little loose way.

R: And I thought, I thought religion did get into this somehow. I'm not saying necessarily Judaism. I thought that the thing started out about spiritual –

R: No, I don't think so...[all talking at once].

R: I think the first week, when we went around talking about our backgrounds; we just brought it in ourselves, some religious background. That maybe we even felt compelled because a rabbi was leading our group, I don't think I've ever stated –

M: You're leading into a piece that I wanted to introduce earlier, that I was thinking of introducing.

R: What's her name?

M: Her name is prayer.

R: Okay.

M: Her name is prayer. And yes, I had some thoughts as the group evolved this group didn't talk a lot about religion. It just didn't come up in terms of religious experience. I think we talked about spiritual dimensions of fatherhood, because they're partly psychological and they're partly situational. And I think that it – I do have some notes from various points along the way of introducing some spiritual ideas. I introduced the story of creation of man as an androgynous being. I introduced a couple of other things in the earlier sessions. I didn't notice this group grab onto a lot of that stuff.

One of the things that I thought we might do, is we might compose a prayer as a group, for fatherhood. I had this idea at one point when I was developing this project.

R: I don't know about that, but I was thinking of maybe a handshake or something, that all fathers could do.

R: Secret handshake...[laughs].

M: Like a secret handshake? Well, you know I did say to you my project was on the psychological and spiritual issues of fatherhood.

R: Is anyone here religious, save R.? We can ask R., too. But, I'm not. I am not.

R: I don't consider myself a very religious person, but religion's important to me.

R: It's very important to me and to my family.

M: What's interesting is how much religion we did talk about. Remember we spent two sessions, addressing our parents and even the biblical ideal of honor thy father and mother, and what does it mean to honor our parents? Remember that?

R: Is that a religious –

R: Yeah, is that religious?

M: It comes from the Ten Commandments. It's definitely from the core of a religious tradition. I guess you don't think of that as religious tradition?

R: I guess so.

M: That's interesting. It's interesting. I kind of thought we did touch on certain religious issues, but not things that you would consider religious, that's interesting.

R: No.

M: What would have made it seem religiously focused for you?

R: I'm not saying I'd want it more religious.

R: Maybe a prayer.

R: Yeah, but R., where I'm coming from. I guess this is my corporate – my now that we've met for, almost 3 months – did we accomplish what we set out to do? Well, first of all, I would think in this type of group, I don't think – maybe I'm wrong – but, like you said, you loosely defined what we were – what the group was going to be about. Which is how I think it should be presented, as opposed to defined goals. Because that could influence what you talk about, as opposed to talking more freely.

I would think any study group – if you lay out – it's like an instructor, if you write everything out, the answers –

R: Then you're controlling the –

R: The answers are geared towards the goals, as opposed to speaking freely, to having a leader whose project it is, interpret what was said.

M: I guess my goal – maybe I haven't accomplished this, and I'm going to give you a written questionnaire that you can fill out anonymously, so don't put your name on it. I hope you'll be really honest. Because this isn't about – I won't take personally any feedback that comes, because I am really trying to work on what I consider a very serious question. Which is – do men benefit from being in a group where they can talk freely together in a safe environment about the emotional struggles of being a man and being a father? And if they do that, will it make their life better in any way at all? That's the question.

So, for me, if you come away from this experience learning something about yourself that you didn't think of before, or have an idea about how to live within a family in the way that you didn't have before. Or if you gain a greater sense of priorities in your

role as a father. Or a better understanding of the grief in your life and how it plays out in your daily life now. Then, I would like to think that – it proves the fact, it proves the proposition, that men's groups, you can call them support groups, or therapy groups, or whatever word you want to use – are a worthwhile thing. They're specifically for men dealing with the realities of fatherhood or with parenting, or child rearing.

So that's sort of on a practical level. On a more philosophical level, do we as a gender, men as a group, have something to learn to become more well rounded in terms of our gender? Can we benefit by developing some of the feminine aspects of ourselves? And does being in group – does getting men together in groups and trying to talk about those kind of issues make a difference?

R: My opinion on that one is yes. But you have to have a group that's willing to open up. I mean, we were all fairly honest here, and we all opened up. You get some people who wouldn't even participate, you just put it on the table, they won't participate.

R: You're absolutely right. But, and I think it goes a step further. Not only do you have to have a group that's willing to talk about these issues that are sensitive issues. But then you have to have it in yourself to be able to implement, or be able to accept what people say, and try to make it relate to your life, and see – you ultimately are responsible to make it work for you. I mean, I heard a lot of things here –

R: Open minded.

R: That would be great that if I could implement them, I know my life would be a lot easier going, and I know that it would be probably a lot better. But the question is, when push comes to shove, am I going to fall back into my old habits of trying to solve all the problems, or am I going for once just let myself feel what's happening around me.

R: What I would think well, is that, don't come out of this with "Can I implement this stuff." Just listening changed you. Somehow. A decision, somewhere --

R: Okay, yes.

R: Somehow, somewhere. Not today, not tomorrow, maybe not a week from now.

R: I understand.

R: Something will be up there and you'll make a decision. It's not going out and implementing. Like R. was saying, just having the group together and hearing what D. feels, hearing what R. feels, hearing this.

R: I can understand.

R: It will affect you somehow, some how.

M: Are you finding it a surprise that other people are dealing with some of the same stuff you are?

R: You realize you're not alone.

R: It shuts you up and lets you see what you 're about.

R: All right. He wasn't here when I told you guys about my wife giving me the mood ring. A new mood ring, you have a mood ring?

R: Sure, I've had a mood ring.

R: Right. When I'm happy it turns green. When it's red it leaves a mark across her forehead...[laughter]. Did I say when it's red? I said when I'm angry, there's a red mark on the forehead. Anyway, you missed that. See, that's what happens when you come late. But, I think it will affect you. Just start talking. That's what talking's all about.

M: I actually was touched quite a few times in the process of this group. Touched by --

R: You're so feminine...[laughter].

M: My teacher's are going to love that one. All my professors are going to just love that.

R: At least he doesn't wear thongs.

R: As far as we know.

R: Oh, he didn't show you?

R: Is that thing on?

R: Yes.

M: Is anybody else touched by any of what was said during this process?

R: I was, yes. I mean, you know, I think that might have been defensive in the way that I – maybe joked with you, but there were definitely some things that were core – I thought we hit a couple of core issues, for me. Issues that were core to me. And that was in that way I was able to face some of my own hurts within the group.

M: Has this experience been different than you expected? Maybe you didn't have any expectations.

R: I liked being with my friends. It was nice.

R: I didn't know what to expect as far as coming into the group, what it was going to be about, how much people were going to open up. I would say it met or did meet my expectations; certainly I was pleased with the way it worked out. I don't know if I would say I was touched by anything in particular, but it was certainly interesting listening to everyone share.

R: Actually, I think what N. said was very true. I don't think you take a piece of the information necessarily and go out and put it to practical use, if you will, where it's

going to better any one of us. But little things do have an effect on you somewhere along the line, something's going to happen – G. had this situation or N. had this situation, and this is how he reacted to it. It made a lot of sense at the time. And all of our stories will help us all out along the way.

R: From a male point of view, I'm really glad I had the opportunity to solve other people's problems. No, I think that it hit a few core issues with me, there were moments of epiphany where you would say something that reminded me, or you would say something that sparked something that I never thought I – last week's issue with the child in the toy store stood out or it just brought a greater issue up, and it was just sort of a metaphor for something that happens to people. So, in that sense it touched me, and whether it changed me, I don't know yet. It depends on how I assimilate it all, and how it sticks with me. I thought this was overall very worthwhile.

M: I'd like to do two more things before we finish. I'd like to hand this out to you. Just take a few minutes and fill this out. And I thought we could end with a closing prayer.

They fill out the questionnaires as asked.

The group was concluded with a spontaneous prayer recorded in Appendix D below.

Appendix B

Notes and Detailed Review of Sessions I-VII

Appendix B: Notes and Detailed Review of Sessions I-VII

Session I began with introductions. However, before each participant shared the information described above it was planned that there be an ice-breaking exercise. This did not take place, as the participants were verbal from the start, beginning with the telling of off-color jokes. There was great laughter at the outset of the group process, which broke the ice.

I then asked the group to write on a sheet of paper the basic personal information described above and then for each to share verbally this information with the group. All listened attentively with regular quips or jokes entered into the flow as each told their stats. I reminded the group about confidentiality and the freedom to abstain from talking about anything if so desired. I reviewed the purpose of the group by reading the statement of goals for the group in Chapter 1 above. I encouraged participation. After my introduction, talking about the weather and the sports events of the day went on for many minutes. Joking and levity was abundant. D. was a little more reticent than the others and N. was boisterous.

The conversation suddenly focused for no apparent reason with G. expressing, "I'm ready. Let's get into it. I was brought up in a strict fashion. I thought it would work fine for me. It hasn't. Now I find myself shutting down with my family. I wish it could have turned out differently. I'm just at a loss."

W. asked, "Do girls and boys require different parenting styles?" Not really answering the question, R. responded, "I wish I could have been raised like in that program...what was it? Oh yes, *The Courtship of Eddies Father*. Now there's an example

of parenting." The group heartily agreed that they hoped they could give that to their own kids.

Many expressed their desire as parents to "control" and "protect" their families. They talked of the power and powerlessness of parenthood. "There's nothing like it when your own kid looks up to you," R. said. The perception that there are differences in sons and daughters was noted. "I get upset, especially when my wife or daughter get upset," said G. The mandate that men were taught to fix and to win was expressed and the fear of not being able to do that was described for example by W.: "When my kid has a tantrum it is so scary. I want to crawl away. I feel so helpless."

This led to mention of how spouses don't seem to have the same views of parenting. Some wives are lax and others hypercritical. Some are overwhelmed and others going with the flow. During this first session, each participant revealed aspects of their current marriage situation and many expressed their wives' concerns that the group would just be about, "wife bashing." Most of the participants were surprised at the fears of their wives, while, N. made sarcastic remarks like, "Well, actually this is a golden opportunity to say it like it is guys." The others laughed and exchanged glances until N. said, "Seriously, I think we are really here to talk about ourselves, not our wives." This engendered agreement.

I then asked N., "What about yourself would you like to say?" He began by telling his "story," which included how he grew up and his troubled relationship with his father. He explained that there was tremendous hypocrisy over religion. His parents never went to synagogue, but the kids were forced and harshly treated for non-compliance. He told of an absent father and a mother with, "ice running thorough her veins." His was a world

where life revolved around the parents, where children were an inconvenience, where the, "parents had no respect for kids." There was also no privacy. Drawers were regularly gone through. He developed very bad feelings for his father and mother and turned to drinking, drugs and other forms of diversion throughout a great deal of his adult life to cover his feelings from childhood. N said poignantly, "It takes a good part of a lifetime to realize the nature of our home environment and its impact on us."

N. then shared his great pride in his life now. He described a "perfect life." After years of therapy and "the opening of my eyes by my wife and her family," life had become whole. He expressed the impact of his wife on his well being as, "beyond words." He spoke of a stress free life, a balanced life and at the end of his saga said, "Its O.K. you can hate me."

During the sharing of his personal upbringing there was focused attention, active listening and eye contact. The participants appeared interested and sensitive to the various expressions of sadness, loss, disappointment as well as joy and appreciation about the "days of our youth." As time ran out there appeared to be much more to say among the participants. Trust had begun to emerge even at this early stage.

Session II began as Session I with some jokes and then a quick shift back into the previous telling of each one's story. G. told his story. He grew up afraid of his father. He was a very big man who was strong and strict. G.'s father never expressed emotions. His father drank and he remembered seeing him crying in a drunken stupor many times. He described how he experienced his father in authoritarian ways. But, he also indicated that in recent adulthood he had seen an unrevealed side of his father, a more tender side that came with middle age. G. expressed, "I found out my father didn't really have a heart of

stone." Throughout this sharing there were many exchanges of assurance by the participants. There was supportive and helpful feedback. Good listening and leaning forward with empathy.

G. then wondered, "I feel like my role as a father is in a way just like my father was to me. He was strict and so am I. I want my kids to be perfect, not afraid of me, but, respectful. I want my kids to respond to me as I responded to my father. With respect."

During this sharing the rest of the group offered various supportive comments, interpretations, even comfort. There was a lot of nodding and "high-fiving" as they shared personal stuff of their lives. Solidarity seemed to be emerging. N. asked, "Who said we have to honor our father, anyway?" There was a laugh and all eyes turned to me. This was the first time I offered outside content into the discussion. I pointed out the lesson from Jewish oral tradition that the Ten Commandments use of the word "honor" was specific. I asked them what they thought that word really meant. There were various answers most pointing to having to take care of our parents when they get old. G. picked up the idea that "honor" didn't have to include "like" or "love." The group agreed. But, as N. said, "It sure would be nice to like my Dad. He could never handle it."

At this point, R. began his story. He spoke of his father being absent, an accountant and deli owner, married to his work. "He used to tell me that he had all the answers and that I should come to him," R. explained. But whenever, he did, his father would ridicule his individuality, so he soon stopped going to him for advice or even contact. R. noted that his father could never say, "I love you," only, "Luv ya," which left a hurt for R. His father was a very tough and hard man. Years of therapy enabled R. to recognize his father as a distant bully, a controlling autocrat – a man totally unlike himself. "I realized at a

moment of incredible catharsis that I was not him," R. reflected. As R.'s life progressed into manhood, he would try to talk to his father who would often say to him, "You're so stupid. You don't listen to me." R. commented, "My father killed my self-esteem. Now I am raising self-esteem monsters. It seems if you don't repeat what your father did, then you err to the other extreme."

Time had run out. Everyone left quietly pondering.

Session III continued as the ones before. The group seemed to develop "its own life." It was not necessary for me to sift out themes, nor did the group seem to want that. I tried to keep the conversation focused on whatever was happening "in the room," which seemed to be the wish of the group. Thus, the free-flowing approach emerged as the normative one for this group. This time with less joking, the group got right down to talking.

I asked the group if there were any thoughts about the last meeting. D. said, "I learn so much just by listening." Others agreed. N. pointed out how it seems that often sons go the opposite way of their fathers. If ours was strict, we are loose and vice versa. W: responded to this with the comment, "As the father of girls, I want to prepare them to be successful in a "man's world." People nodded but offered no discussion. In fact, they tuned to W. and instead of responding to his comment per se, inclined to him to tell his story, which he then did. W. commenced his story, beginning with the dramatic statement, "I was raised by wolves." His childhood home was run like, "a military operation." His mother ran it. His mom used force and they were hit almost every day. Life was a constant, "time bomb." He spoke of hiding out in his bedroom just to get

through the evening. He went on describing his father as weak and passive and his mother as, "out of her fucking mind!"

W. then described that as a father now he is very sensitive to his own rage and worried that his mother's rage is in him. This makes him more lax with his kids, which upsets his wife. He then reflected, "I really never let go with my kids. I guess I am kind of like my dad. I can see that his passivity might have driven my mother wild."

With this reference to the passivity of the father W. shifted focus and asked the group: "Why is it that women want validation all the time, but, don't equally give it in return." This was an important projection of his childhood experience, which the group did not specifically point out, but rather took up his question seriously. The group then began to discuss their challenges in their marriages, specifically with regard to balancing work, home chores, fathering and being a husband.

This sentiment regarding wives not understanding or valuing their husband's contribution to the life of the family was echoed by many of the participants. All except N. shared frustration at feeling that their wives complained often about them failing to do chores at home, or take over with the children at the end of the workday. Many examples were shared and responded to with affirmation.

G. shared an anecdote to illustrate this problem. He told of being sick with a bad cold and telling his wife, "I'm feeling really sick, honey. I'm going to stay home from work today." To which his wife responded, "Oh good. You can do the laundry and stuff around the house." G. laughed. "I decided to go to work anyway. She just couldn't let me be sick." To which, N. retorted, "No. You wouldn't let yourself be sick."

G. then spoke emotionally about his family. "I hope they'll realize someday that I'm the engine that made the choo choo train go up the mountain." G. then shared another story of his frustration about not being understood. During a recent snowstorm he had been outside shoveling for 3 hours. His wife calls to him from the window, "Hey. When are you coming in to help? We have company coming!" G. asks the group, "What's wrong with this picture?" He then talked about how he "escapes" into his head when conflict arises at home. There was great affirmation of that. "Why do men escape?" G. asked. "To validate themselves. No one else will," G. responded to his own question.

D. responded, "I know what you mean. I need something which reminds me of my own self." Some mentioned their sense of loss of independence since marriage and parenthood. Many examples of unrequited desires of hobbies and avocations were shared. There was a strong emotion of sadness at what was described as a lack of validation from spouses. D. then shared an example. "I have a mountain bike, I haven't ridden it in 2 years. If I tried to carve out the time, I'd feel guilty." There was nodding agreement. Then, without words, the group inclined to D. to tell his story.

D. told his story. His parents, "sharing together in our upbringing," raised him. He told that they were hit as children, spanked, but that his parents were basically easy going. They gave their children great freedom. Their family owned and operated a day camp for kids so his life was always a very kid friendly life. The group reoriented its posture instantly as he shared his upbringing as so wholesome. To D. it was, "uneventful." He felt that as a kid he was given clear messages about what was acceptable and not and left to deal with life basically on his own. "I learned mostly not by what my parents said, but by what they did." It became clear by the end of his story that

he felt it uninteresting and said so apologizing for not having dramatic tales to tell. The group re-assured him that they were glad to hear that someone hadn't been "totally screwed up." D. then said, "The most incredible part of my life was the birth of my kids. No matter what ever is wrong, I know that these were the most unbelievable times ever.

This led to a very tender, loving sharing by every member of how they felt when their children were born. It was a very touching conversation. Some of the participants welled-up. The expressions of awe were palpable. Statements included: "It was beyond words," "It is #1, there isn't a close 2nd," "It was rapture," "There was no joy like it." Faces lit up during this discussion. W. said, "I was born again, with a purpose in life. My life had no meaning until my daughter was born." And with that comment, time had run out.

Session IV began out in the hall before the official starting time. There was comradery among the participants. The session itself opened with reflection on the end of the previous session and "the gushy" way we ended. There seemed to be a subtle steering away from the emotions of the last session. But, as N. said, "Who says men aren't gushy?" At this point G. asked me: "What is progress in this group?" I asked the group what they thought. There was a variety of answers that pointed to the sharing of common experiences and emotions as being in and of itself of great value.

I asked them what were some of the common themes that they were interested in discussing. The subject returned to the pressures of being a man as provider, parent and husband and the competing demands between self, family and work. All of them had told their personal stories now. There was a sense that everyone was equally exposed. Now the focus moved toward issues. As N. expressed it, "Do you think tribal men came home from the hunt and had to take care of the kids?" A discussion ensued about childcare and

the peer pressure felt by all that in adult life now days, the necessity of having help in the home really mattered. "I don't get it. When I was growing up, we never had help in the house. Now, if my wife doesn't have someone in at least 3 times a week she can't handle it," W. said. D. responded, "I understand what you are saying. I work all day and I know my wife has a full time job as a mother and I take her work really seriously, but, it's like, I come home from the job and she hands me the kids and I'm supposed to take over. I don't have anyone helping me do my job. She's got help almost every day and she still acts like she is overwrought." R. said, "What do they do all day?" There was laughter.

The discussion continued and reflected these earlier themes of inequality in marriage and loss of freedom. W. complained, "I feel like I lost my life when my kid was born." R. answered, "Well, in some ways it is a loss of all we used to do and be." "I miss my freedom," G. lamented. There was this moment in the discussion where there was a sudden swing back and forth between resentment about having children and extreme sublime sensitivity about parenting expressed, for example when R. said, "Birth brings an awareness of death you know. I never thought I could die for anything until my daughter was born." To this W. responded, "Well, while I would die for them, I fear dying because they need me."

The talk went back to laments of loss of childhoods past and then expressed sadness about having to grow up at all. W. offered, "Yeah. But, life is more valuable with kids. Our lives matter more. We just have to grow up." As the session wound down, D. said, "It's an impossible position we're in. As adults we need to be conservative, careful, adult like, but we want to be fun loving, the life of the party, goofy and the good ole pal, all at the same time. It's tough." With this comment, time had run out.

Session V began with D. noting that he didn't "feel my story was very interesting." A discussion ensued about, "Who says men need to be interesting?" Many expressed the feeling that they were raised to be stoic and controlled in their behavior. Then R. asked, "There's got to be room for some passion here!" Nodding all around.

The participants responded with various stories expressing the challenge it is dealing with kids and wives who press our "buttons." W. recalled that he survived his crazy mother by being "uninteresting." This brought the group to a pause. "Yeah. It's true we often have to just keep our feelings under cover just to get by," D. expressed. There was a sudden roar of feelings about needing to "run and hide," and "escape into the den."

At this point, N. asked: "Has anyone yet achieved an adult relationship with their parents?" He went on: "We need to break with our parents, but, it's so hard." W. responded, "We are our parents. You can never overcome that." There was agreement that parents and in-laws were interfering factors and hard to tolerate.

W. then returned to the roles of husbands and wives. He said, "We seem to be looked to often for answers. But, when we answer or give suggestions, our wives reject our ideas." There was great laughter. It was expressed that men need to solve problems while women just need us "to be there." There was this quandary expressed between men being there to supply a solution or to supply empathy.

At this point, G. spoke about an "emptiness" he could not fill. "I'm always looking for something to make me happy," he said. He achieved all that life had to offer and still he felt unfulfilled. He married a good woman. Not enough. He had two beautiful girls, bought the Volvo, bought the house. Not enough. "What do I buy now?" he asked. "I

even believe in God, but, that's not enough," he shared. Now he was thinking of getting a "65' Mustang." "What's wrong with me?" G. asked the group.

N. responded, "My parents were not trusting, so I spent most of my life not trusting anyone and having this empty hole inside me. My hole wasn't filled until I met my wife with whom I have a fully trusting relationship." At this point two participants crumbled up pieces of paper and threw them at N. W. said, "Kick N. out of the group." All laughed. D. asked, "What is a midlife crisis? What happens that makes us feel like this, needing more and more stuff?" R. starts to well up with tears and reveals that he is having severe marital problems. The group tried to console him with encouragement as time ran out.

Session VI began in earnest with the group wanting to pick right up on R.'s marriage. Most participants went into solution mode and offered encouragement to R. to find a reasonable fair basis for separation from his wife. N. then lectured about the divorce laws of New York concluding his remarks with, "You gotta do what you gotta do." R. thanked the group for their concern.

G. continued his discussion about never feeling like he has enough. N. asked, "Why should you feel guilty about having toys. It's a guy thing to want toys." G. responded, "It's not about toys. It's about achieving the American dream and asking myself, 'What next?'" He then said, "I've always wanted a boy, but I can't say it directly." This was followed by a discussion of how men feel being vulnerable in front of their wives. He said, "I just can't do it. Men don't tell their wives that they hurt." There was nodding agreement around the room. W. added, "We were never taught to show our emotions, or to ask our wives for emotional support. They say it's a turn on when men act vulnerable, but, in truth, if you act weak, it confuses them." G. explained, "I would like to be able to

tell my wife what I am really feeling but I just can't handle being let down if she doesn't respond in a loving way. So, I'd rather not even share my vulnerability. Women say they want men to be more vulnerable, but, do they...really?" The group then offered G. advice as to how to convince his wife to have another child. There was great empathy for G. He expressed very deeply, on the verge of tears his sadness. Speaking about trying to talk with his wife he said, "I guess I'm used to it. The interruptions. Never finishing conversations we may start. Keeping the lifestyle together is very hectic. I try to set time aside for self-reflection but there are always encroachments. I'm just used to the fact that we may start and never finish the talk. I really don't want her to think it is coming from this group. Having a son still matters. But, I don't know. It'll never happen." Again the group went into the mode of offering advice. "Why don't you go out to dinner and just tell her how you feel?" asked R. "I can't do that," G. responded. "I just can't get too emotional with my wife." "Why not?" I asked. "Men just don't," G. answered. D. added, "He's right you know. It is very hard to become emotional with a woman."

R. then shared his analysis: "It's a very difficult bind. Women say they want us to be emotional but, then when we are they don't know how to deal with it. They just don't know how to handle it. It's like they don't know what to do with it when they get what they ask for." There was nodding around the room. W. added, "It's so true. Even when I try to be a little open with my wife, she gets cynical and talks like, 'Oh W. what do you want?' It's like she starts to baby me like she does my 4 year old."

G. wondered, "Is it natural for a man to want a son?" There was debate about this. Some of the participants responded that having a daughter is wonderful and offers a unique experience for a father, that it, "may even be easier emotionally in a father

daughter relationship," R. added. To which N. retorted, "Duh. What do you think we have been talking about all these weeks? Fathers and sons mostly just have shit. Hey, I'm just lucky. I have a great wife, a wonderful son who I am loving to death, for whom I would do anything and work is work and that's it." This comment stopped the group in its tracks.

I asked the group what stopped the conversation. D. answered, "Look I'm happy for N. Good for N." I asked, "Does anyone else have any feelings right now?" W. answered, "Hey, we gotta help G. He's really hurting." The group shifted again to problem solving for G. and urged G. to talk with his wife. He explained that it was difficult because he felt like she didn't take him seriously. There was a sense of hopelessness that G.'s wife was done with having kids and he would have to find other ways to satisfy his longings. G. thanked the group for their ideas and expressed his desire that the group move on.

At this point, with a mood of resignation and reflection, there was discussion by many of the participants that before marriage and parenthood, men have no idea of how having kids changes the dynamics of marriage. There was a rare extended quiet, which over took the group.

I asked the group about the quiet. D. thought they needed a break from the intensity of the emotions. I asked why it was tough to focus on emotions. There was almost a universal response: Men don't work with emotions. Men work with solutions. It was expressed almost as a mantra. I asked why it had to be this way. They responded that men simply aren't trained to focus on feelings. I suggested: "Maybe it would be valuable for men to try to focus on feelings instead of solutions". They thought that was an interesting

idea. I decided to let it be taken in at that point and then, as planned, I asked the group how they thought the process was going.

There were strong feelings that being together with other men was of significant value. Many expressed that the group felt safe and that issues were coming up that made people feel like they weren't alone. Some spoke about never having had a chance to really talk about their situations and their own fathers. They felt the group was a valuable place to "solve problems we share with each other." As D. put it, "I am glad to know that other people are dealing with the same stuff I am. And I think we're starting to deal with some real issues. The fact that men avoid feeling in favor of solving problems is a key for me." There was nodding of agreement.

At this point I asked the group if they would consider the composition of a prayer to try to concretize the flow of the discussions. I explained that it would be free flowing. They looked at me with little or no reaction, as if I had interrupted their natural rapport. Imposing from outside a gimmick. They almost laughed. I could tell there was no interest at this time and simply withdrew the offer with little commentary. As time had run out, the session came to an end with the participants milling around for a few minutes afterwards talking amongst themselves.

Session VII began with people seemingly eager to get started. I asked an opening question that came to me as we were sitting. No one spoke for a minute or two at the beginning and I was curious: "What would you say to a father-to-be about being a father?" There was a pause and then many answers were offered. D. said, "Whatever your expectations may be, no matter how built up it is, it goes beyond all expectations. And just getting a hug from your kid, you just melt."

W. responded: "I would tell the guy, it's so much fucking work. Be prepared. Your life is about to be on hold for a lot of years. The rewards while your life is on hold are incredible. But, your life will be on hold. Without kids you can have your hobbies, ride your bike, do what you want. Sometimes I wish I had more time for myself." N. then said, "Just having the hug and the time to be together. Forget all the other stuff. Get all of the "me stuff" out of your system before you have kids, like I did. Then you'll be satisfied with your life as a father. Once you get over yourself you have so much more time to be available to your family. I am so fulfilled with my wife and son."

W. quipped, "You gotta hate this guy." N. answered, "That's O.K. I don't mind. R. then pointed out, "But it is important to honor one's own needs." There was nodding all around. D. then said, "But, N. really does have it right. It is about priorities to some degree. I do love being with my kids and my wife too." At this point the phone rang in the outer office and on the machine W.'s wife was calling because their daughter was very sick with the flu and she needed W. to come home right away. Hearing his wife on the machine, I answered and brought W. the phone. We sat with him as his wife called him home. He got up, smiled and said, "Gotta go. See ya next time." Everyone wished him well and for a couple of minutes after W. left the group was silent.

I asked the group, "How are you feeling?" D. said, "This reminds me of how things really are. Our families really do depend on us." R. answered, "It's true. In spite of all of our talk, when we're needed there is nothing like being there when it really matters." G. added, "All of us would do the same thing W. did if we had a sick kid." Everyone nodded. N. asked, "But, you guys talk about it like it's some kind of feat. Like you're glad to be there at the so-called, 'times that matter.' All the times matter. Don't you get

it? I don't mean to preach but, we're fathers, it's not a matter of obligation, or responsibility, this is like the best thing you can do in life. Why do you guys sound so burdened by all this?"

There was quiet again. Then an amazing if not strange thing happened about 45 minutes before the end of the group's time: R. said, "You know, I haven't seen my kids or family in days. I'd kind of like to go home and see them before it's too late." N, responded, "Now you're talking." G. reflected, "It sure would surprise my wife and girls if I arrived at home simply to see them." D. went on, "This is a great idea. And it'll show that this group is making a difference". There was a desire around the table for each one to leave a bit early, to end early in order to go home with the specific intention to spend a few extras, unplanned, surprise minutes with wives and kids and they all looked at me. I chuckled. Inside I felt very unsure about this situation.

I decided to trust the group's collective being. I offered my own honest reflection that my wife too would be pleasantly surprised if I "sacrificed" something as important as my "Men's Group," to come home to put my daughter to bed and get to bed early with my wife. There was a collective "high five" and we adjourned. Everyone walked out expressing how they were excited to see the faces of their wives upon arrival except for N. who said as we walked out the door, "You know what you make as a special event, I do every night and you can too. I experience this all the time." R. responded, "N. I gotta love you...but fuck you!" N answered as he walked away, "Compliment accepted. Goodnight everyone." We parted to fulfill our missions.

There were many feelings, which arose in me in reaction to this sudden adjournment of the group. Here I was, the caring guide, the helpful ear, the convener of the group, and

they wanted to be somewhere else. I felt rejected, and realize this is subjective counter transference, a reflection of my own need to be accepted, to be a performer who dazzles his audience as a means of achieving approval. Having been raised in an atmosphere myself with an absent father; the approval of men takes on heightened meaning for me. This was important for me to realize, but I did not bring it up to the group, but, rather faced the emotion within myself, overcame the feelings of inadequacy and felt stronger emotionally as a consequence.

Appendix C

Men's Group Experience Evaluation Form

**Men's Group Experience
Evaluation Form**

Was this group a meaningful experience? Why or why not?

Have your ideas about fatherhood changed at all as a result of this process? If so, how?

Name something specific you may try to do differently in your role as father and husband that was initiated by your work with this group.

Please honestly evaluate the facilitator on any aspects you deem of importance.

Please share any other comments or suggestions for future groups of this type.

Appendix D:

Transcript: The Spontaneous Concluding Prayer

Appendix D: The Spontaneous Concluding Prayer:

M: Let's go around the room and say a collective prayer. Dear God, Dear Spirit of the Universe, Dear whoever, To who it may concern and add your own words, a few words of prayer for the future and your life as a dad.

R: Dear God please give me that patience to be a loving father and a good husband and realize that life is short, time is short and I need to pay attention to the people I love most. Bless my kids and my wife with good health.

R: Ditto God. (Laughter) And please help me to forgive my father and my mother for being so dense. Mostly bless my family with goodness.

R: Hello. Whoever might be there. Thanks for a great life and for my kids and my wife and for the ability to take care of them. And thanks for this group. I hope we will all have better lives.

R: Dear God, thanks for this group and thanks for the love I experience from my family. I hope we will all be blessed with good health. I hope I can learn to slow my life down and be there for my family.

R: Dear God, Please help me to become secure in myself so that I never have to be angry. Let me listen and be there for my wife even when I feel like she is taking advantage of me. I pray that my children will have no doubt that I love them.

M: Dear God, may all the supplications of this group reach you. We are a group of men who wish to be better men, more sensitive men, more loving men, more vulnerable men, more healed, men, more gentle men. Thank you for every insight, which we might gain from being together. Thank you for the trust what we have created together. Bless

our families and those we love with good health and long life. We thank you with all our words and our deeds, which make for peace in this world and within our families. Amen.

R: Whoa R. What a prayer. No wonder you're a rabbi.

M: Comes with the territory. I want to thank you all very much for being a part of this special experience. I have learned so much from you and will remember this time we have spent together for a long time.

R: Hey man. Our pleasure. Thank you.

R: Yeah. Thanks R. Great group.

R: O.K. guys we're off.

R: Take care.

R: We will.

Hugs and handshakes were exchanged and the group adjourned.

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