SOLUTION ORIENTED FAMILY THERAPY

with

Bill O’Hanlon

Introduction

This video is one in a series portraying the leading theories of family therapy and their application. This series presents the predominant theories and how they are practiced. Each video in the series features a leading practitioner and educator in the field of family therapy. The series is unique in that it features real couples and families with real problems. It is also timely because family therapists need to understand and be able to use a variety of approaches in order to effectively serve the diverse families that seek help.

A theory is a framework that helps us understand something or explains how something works. Just as there are many different people and personalities, there are different theories of understanding how couples and families interact and how change occurs, each with its own guidelines for understanding and procedures for operation. Each theory has devotees who think and act as the theory prescribes in order to help people change their lives. Certain theories explain certain phenomena better than others. The individual marriage or family therapist needs to develop his or her own approach to helping couples and families with problems. Specific objectives in family therapy include (1) removing, modifying, or retarding existing symptoms, (2) mediating disturbed patterns of behavior, and (3) promoting positive growth and development within the family system.

The video begins with a brief discussion with the practitioner concerning the theory. We then move to the actual counseling session. After the session, Bill O’Hanlon discusses the session with Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, and an audience made up of counselors, graduate students, and counselor educators.
Because the video series contains actual counseling interviews, professional integrity is required to protect the confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal lives with us.

**Purpose**

The series is designed for pre-professional training in graduate and undergraduate classes in family counseling theory. Students will learn about the theory and watch a leading practitioner work with a couple or family in a “first session” interview.

The series is also appropriate for workshops or individual study for the professional development of practicing family counselors, social workers, clinical psychologists, or psychotherapists. Professionals will learn from the practitioner by gaining new ideas and insights which can be helpful in working with current or future clients.

**How to Use the Video**

1. As a *stand alone activity* for professional development or orientation to Solution Oriented Family Therapy. If you are using the video this way, it might be helpful to first read about Solution Oriented Family Therapy. See page 38 of this guide for a list of suggested readings. Or, you may wish to watch the video, read about the theory, and then watch the video a second time.

   As you watch the video, note the questions included on the enclosed test. This will help you identify key points related to this theory. If you wish continuing education credit, complete the test and submit it as directed.

2. As an *integral part of a course in theories of family therapy* with the textbook, student study guide, and instructor’s guide. The text by Jon Carlson and Diane Kjos (1999), *Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn
& Bacon with accompanying *Study Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, and *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, published by Allyn & Bacon of Needham Heights, Massachusetts, are coordinated with the videotapes and can assist in guiding the student through the learning process, including key concepts, application, and techniques.

3. As an **adjunct in classes** to demonstrate a practical application of Solution Oriented Family Therapy or to demonstrate specific interventions and techniques. Guidelines and suggested discussion topics will be included in Carlson and Kjos (1999), *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

4. As a **basis for a series of class sections or a workshop** for either professional development or counselor education. You may choose to use all or parts of the video to support specific teaching objectives. Suggestions for scheduling, discussion questions, and other activities will be included in Carlson and Kjos (1999), *Instructor’s Guide to Introduction to Family Therapy*, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

**Family Therapy with Bill O’Hanlon**

Bill O’Hanlon, with an M.S. in Family Studies, Marital/Family Therapy, from Arizona State University, is one of the developers of brief solution-oriented therapy, and has contributed to Ericsonian Therapy as well as to collaborative/constructivist approaches. He is a Licensed Mental Health Professional, a Certified Professional Counselor, and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Bill serves on the advisory board of *The journal of collaborative therapies* and the *International journal of marriage and family counselors*. He has authored a number of journal articles and has authored or co-authored fifteen books including *Taproots*, *Solution-oriented hypnosis*, *A brief guide to brief*
therapy, and *Love is a verb*. His books have been translated into eight different languages. Bill teaches therapy seminars throughout the world and is a popular presenter at national conferences. He lives and works in Sante Fe, New Mexico.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Identify theoretical concepts which are descriptive of Solution Oriented Family Therapy.
2. Recognize specific interventions or techniques related to Solution Oriented Family Therapy.
3. Describe the range of applications of Solution Oriented Family Therapy.

**Abstract of Solution Oriented Family Therapy Video**

This video is approximately 119 minutes long and is divided into three parts:


Part II: An initial therapy session with Bill O’Hanlon and a family consisting of a mother, father and adult daughter who lives in the home. (47 minutes).

Part III: Discussion of the therapy session with Bill O’Hanlon, Jon Carlson, Diane Kjos, and a panel of human service professionals and graduate students (47 minutes).

**Transcript**

TH 1 So, I guess, I said my name is Bill. I don't, I ask not to know anything about you before you came because I want to come in with sort of a fresh view and see if we can talk about something that might be helpful for you or useful for you tonight, and if I can change anything for you if that's what you want to do. So,
I don't even know why you are here exactly, and so if somebody can tell me that, maybe introduce yourselves and tell me why you are here and what you think we should talk about tonight, what would be helpful to talk about.

M 1 Well, I was the instigator of this whole thing.

TH 2 Okay, you're the ring leader. Okay.

M 2 And we just felt that we needed help in getting across to Pamela that she has to communicate with us a lot better, and she needs some self esteem with herself, and what else?

TH 3 So, are you all living together.

M 3 Yeah.

M 4 We live together, and that was our main project. Giving her more self esteem and . . .

F 1 For her to communicate to us.

M 5 To us.

F 2 Not us to her but fur her to us. When we ask her a question or something, she just shuts up and walks away and mumbles.

TH 4 Okay, so you two are pretty good about in your view coming to her and telling her what's going on or asking her what's going on. Sometimes she . . .

F 3 Most, all the time. I should say 99% of the time.

Th 5 99% of the time?

F 4 And that's going high.

TH 6 All right she would, when you ask her something, walk away, and you hear her mumbling something so you know she's got something going on but you're not sure what it is or it seems like she's mad or something?

F 5 Yeah, she gets very upset when we try talking to her or asking her a question. To us, we're her parents. You should be able to talk to your parents about anything, you know, and she won't talk to us about nothing. Because she
feels that it's her personal life.

TH 7  Right. So sometimes she has this sense, you know, lookit, you guys lay off, it's my life. Don't bug me about this stuff. I have my own private stuff.

F 6   That's the attitude I get.

TH 8  All right. And you two say we're not trying to bug you. We want to find out what's going on with you, have a little more communication going back and forth?

F 7   Yes, but it's been this way for many, many, many, many years.

M 6   She's afraid to tell us things. I think that's the whole thing. She thinks that we are going to get angry with her or say no to her, but she has done this since she's been a little girl, afraid to tell me things, or she'll tell us at the very last minute if she's going some place it will be, I'm going out, and I'm leaving right now. Well, you didn't plan on her going out, or you didn't . . .

TH 9  You were expecting something different. It happened occasionally when she was younger, but it's gotten more in the years since she's grown up, and you've told them that, that you don't want to hear disapproval or you're afraid they'll get upset or whatever so you just learned to keep quiet, spring it on them at the last minute, and then you're out of there. And that you two would prefer a little more notice so you could plan ahead and all that kind of stuff.

M 7   Right.

TH 10 And a little more back and forth communication.

M 8   Right.

F 8   Just about anything.

TH 11 Not even plans.

F 9   Just like today. I been on her since 3:00. Start to get ready.

TH 12 We are going to go tonight. We've got to get going.

F 10 Got to get going, got to get going, got to get going. And what it took
you an hour to eat?

F 11 She is a slow eater, but that's procrastination.

TH 13 So you started talking to her about this, and then what happened? I guess I want to know what typically happens with this kind of stuff.

F 12 Nothing. She'll say yeah I know.

TH 14 She didn't say yes I know, or get off my back.

F 13 No, just yeah I know.

D 1 Yeah I know.

TH 15 That's what she'll say, yeah I know.

F 14 Yeah I know.

TH 16 That's it.

F 15 Okay.

TH 17 Okay. And then you're here. So you got here, and you got here a little early which is better than some people might have done as we have heard. But so how is that part a problem. I mean you got here. Maybe the communication wasn't so good on the way.

F 16 It's because I have to get nerved up and get angry and get frustrated in order to get her going.

TH 18 So . . .

F 17 If I don't get nervous . . .

TH 19 So if you get wound up, eventually you think it lights a fire under her.

F 18 I think it does a little. When I get mad, then she'll do anything I say.

TH 20 Oh, is that right?

F 19 When I get mad.

TH 21 Then she gets (?) which is what you said earlier and what you said a little it's like, I don't want him to get mad at me.

D 2 Yeah.
F 20 She won't do it unless I get mad at her.
TH 22 So you'd like to see her do it and not have to get so worked up.
F 21 Yeah, Pam let's go. It's time to take a shower, time to get going. We got to get going to get going.
TH 23 All right.
M 9 Well that's another thing. Why should we have to tell her to take a shower. She should know that she has to take a shower. She should know that she has to brush her teeth. She should know that she has to comb her hair.
TH 24 But you two are . . .
M 10 Constantly telling . . .
TH 25 Talking to her about every step.
TH 26 You got to get going, you got to eat faster, we got to get going here, you got to get dressed, you got to take a shower, you got to brush your teeth. We have to be there by this time, and we have to leave by this time.
F 22 Quarter after five and she was still eating.
TH 27 Right, and you were getting pretty . . .
F 23 I was already getting nerved. Of course I didn't have my shirt on or my shoes on yet either, but . . .
TH 28 But you were kind of thinking well I can get those on pretty quickly. I'm not sure how quickly she'll get ready.
F 24 How fast can I light the fire.
TH 29 And how much I'll need to light the fire. Okay. So Pam, tell me about this. Is this pretty accurate as far as you can tell?
D 3 Yes, yes. Very much.
TH 30 Okay, well tell me your view of it. Same thing? You don't want him to get mad at you and what happens when they start talking to you and you're walking away?
I just clam up.

Do you feel pressure from the outside or what?

No, I just clam up.

Why?

Don't know why.

Don't know why. Just developed into a habit over the years? Okay. So let me ask you this question.

But this is what happens now. Exactly what happens now. When she gets frustrated and that, this is exactly what happens. What she is doing right now.

What she gets a little teary?

She gets teary, she gets angry...

Angry?

No, not angry. I'm just teary right now.

I didn't see anger yet. I didn't see any of that.

No, now it's more teary.

She's sort of like she said she kind of clams up and closes in. She hasn't clammed up totally yet, but she's gotten quieter, and she's gotten more teary, and you've seen that happen a lot. Let me ask you this question, and it may be a strange question for the three of you, but I was really interested, I am always interested in these things. You say 99% of the time, all the time, well 99% of the time this happens. I'm really interested in that 1%. Just tell me about that 1%. Like tell me about the three of you, I want to hear about, because this may be something that will teach me about what goes on, what works, what doesn't work. The three of you, any of you, maybe you first, Pam since you usually would clam up at this kind of stuff. Tell me about a moment when it seems to go better between you and the parents, either one of the parents, or all three of you. Can you remember those moments when it goes a little better? What happens then? What's
different?

D 8 Nothing. I mean when I do something right like I just think of something to do that has to be done I just go do it. Nothing happens. No yelling, no screaming . . .

TH 38 No screaming, but you don't hear wow, you did that on your own, great, good job.

D 9 Yes, I do, sometimes.

TH 39 Sometimes they say wow, that was great. We liked that. Do you hear much of that?

M 11 There are times, I agree, that I don't always say that, but there are times . . .

TH 40 There are times when you say wow, we really appreciated that. You got ready on time. You did this on your own. You took a shower on your own, whatever it may be. Sometimes you're not perfect at it, you don't do it all the time, but mostly when you do something on your own initiative or on time or when they want you to do it or when one of them want you to do it or whatever, things are a little quieter. You don't get so much pressure from the outside. Well, and so give me an example of a time when you did something like that. You know, a recent thing. Something maybe in the last year that you did something on your own. You just did it, you initiated it, and it worked out pretty well, you told them you were going out a little quicker than you usually would have or something, I don't know. Something like that.

D 10 Okay. I had a wake to go to yesterday. And I told them like the night before. Well I didn't get the news until the day before that which was okay.

TH 41 So that was faster than you usually would have told them?

D 11 Right. Why hurry. All I had to do was take a shower and comb my hair and leave.
TH 42 To get to this. All right.
M 12 She did it on her own I take it because I wasn't at home.
TH 43 Right. So . . .
D 12 All he did was remind me to take a shower.
TH 44 All right, so you did it on your own for the most part, a little reminder there, but not having to get nerved.
F 29 No, didn't care.
TH 45 Not having to get fired up.
F 30 Didn't care.
TH 46 It was on her own. And she let you two know the night before.
M 13 She did.
F 31 She did, and she looked good when she went out to the wake last night. She dressed up.
TH 47 She had chosen her own outfit, got dressed up done something that you approved of.
F 32 She had done very good.
TH 48 All right.
F 33 Which I admit I haven't said anything about yet until just now.
TH 49 Okay. But again . . .
F 34 It was a quick thing. She came and gave me a goodbye kiss, then she's going, and then she's gone.
TH 50 There is no time to congratulate her or get nerved up. Nothing.
F 35 It's a shock.
TH 51 Wait a minute, who's this clown that was substituted for my daughter? So, let me ask you about that? What was different about that for you? I know what was different about that for them. How come? How come that time you needed to get it together, and you tell them earlier, and what was different about that? How
did you get yourself to do that?

D 13 I got home about 3:00, had to be out of there by 4:30.

TH 52 Right, but you told them the night before. That was the first thing that was different. How did you get yourself to tell them the night before and why did you decide to do that, how did you decide to do that? Usually you would have waited until the last minute.

D 14 Because I got it the night before that.

TH 53 You heard the night before, you heard the news that you were going to have to go.

D 15 Then I went to work, come home. I have a funeral to go to or a wake to go to the next day. Because usually she asks me if I'm going to be home for supper. So I said no, not tomorrow. So, I go to work, come home, 3:00. I had to be out of here by 4:30. I had to meet my buddy, or my friend at 5:00. I only had an hour and a half to get showered, hair washed, teeth brushed.

TH 54 That's what you told yourself. You better get moving girl. Let's go. All right so you sort of said I am going to do this, and I've got to do it quickly, and he reminded you about the shower, and you were oh that's right, I've got to do the shower. Great.

D 16 In there, out.

TH 55 In there, out of there, in record time. That was fast to get all that stuff ready . . .

D 17 It usually takes me about twenty minutes. Yesterday it took me about ten, fifteen.

TH 56 But I'm really curious about that. And usually yes, of course, she wants to know if you are going to be home for dinner, but sometimes, as we've heard, she doesn't know until the last minute whether you are going to be home for dinner. I just want to know what the difference is and how you decided to tell
them the night before. What was different about that? How did you decide that?

D 18 I don't know. I just, on instinct or on impulse.

TH 57 Okay, impulse. And so did you like how that went better? Did you like how that went better?

D 19 Very much.

TH 58 Okay. So, you want that to happen more?

D 20 Right.

TH 59 And you two like that.

M 14 Oh yeah.

TH 60 That was different. You didn't have to get all . . .

F 36 Well, I have found out that when she wants something for herself, she can do it. She can do whatever she wants as long as it's for herself.

TH 61 She really wanted to go to that wake.

F 37 She really wanted to go.

TH 62 She got it together in record time that you would have said oh, she'll never get it together in this time. Well, after she got it together, she got dressed in a way that you thought that looks good. It's good you're going out dressed like that.

F 38 I was sort of proud of her. She looked good. She looked good.

TH 63 All right. So we know she's capable of it.

F & M Oh yeah, she's very capable.

TH 64 All right. So it's not like some inability that she has.

F 39 I can give you one thing that's wrong. Real quick. She has duties around the house to do. I am retired. I sit on my butt all day long, and I refuse to do certain things.

TH 65 Is that your job?

F 40 I refuse to do certain things, okay. Ask her when was the last time she
vacuumed the house. Now I haven't done it. I was going to do it today and I said no I'm not. And ask her when was the last time she vacuumed the house. It's supposed to be done once every day.

TH 66  Once a day?
M 15  Oh she brought home a dog that she has to clean up after.
TH 67  So that was part of the deal?
M 16  Oh yeah.

TH 68  You bring home a dog you have to vacuum to get the dog hairs off and stuff like that. It's maybe been a couple of days since she's done it . . .
M 17  Just a couple.
M 18  We could kind of go on and this could mushroom . . .

TH 69  All right. But so that's part of the deal is that I'm retired. I'm not going to vacuum.
F 41  It's not that. No, that's not it. I'll do it.

TH 70  I don't want to vacuum. You got the dog. That was part of the deal. If you brought the dog home and you have the dog you agree to vacuum every day, but she hasn't done it as much. What would be the typical thing that would happen when it didn't work and when she didn't do it. How would it get into a problem?

M 19  Well, I come home from work, and when I walk in the house and I see all this that isn't done, I have a bad habit of saying, well this isn't done, that isn't done. Even before I probably say hello.

TH 71  Hello, good to see you Pam.
F 42  I've been arguing with her about that. That even happens with me.

TH 72  She notices the things that are not done . . .
F 43  Compared to the floor that's been scrubbed, but the whole house is clean . . .

TH 73  She doesn't say boy thank you for scrubbing the floor, thank you for . . .
She goes “Wait a minute. Why is this stuff out on the counter and why is this . . .”
F 44    Why is there still a cigarette in the ashtray?
TH 74    Well, you wouldn't notice the things that are cleaned up right? Those are cleaned up. You notice the things that aren't clean up.
M 20    Right.
TH 75    Okay, so you would like a little more acknowledgment for what is done, and maybe you would like that too? At least for the things you have done, right? And maybe a little hello, how are you before you launch into the critique.
F 45    I think I've got her stopped from doing that.
TH 76    You think so?
M 21    I've been really trying. I really have been trying not to come in and say oh gee, why isn't this done, or why . . .
F 46    I jumped on her . . .
TH 77    And what would happen if she typically came in. She'd clam up and go to her room?
F 47    I'd jump back . . .
TH 78    You'd jump on her and the two of you would start . . .
F 48    No, not really. It would just be . . .
TH 79    Or just be one or two things back and forth.
F 49    Yeah, just a . . .
F 50    Couple of comments.
F 51    Yeah, that's all.
TH 80    Welcome home dear, something like that, sarcastic?
F 52    Yeah.
TH 81    Okay, all right. But it wouldn't be the greatest interaction.
F 53    . . . if she walked in and start in and say I love you dear. Things like that.
TH 82    Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you've been working on changing, he's gotten on
you about that pattern, and you've been working on changing that.

M 22 Yeah, I've been trying to clam up when I come in.

TH 83 Clam up?

M 23 If I see something I just do it myself.

TH 84 Oh you do it yourself. Is that the best way to handle it?

M 24 Well, I feel it is instead of causing . . .

F 54 It's the easiest way to do it!

TH 85 It's the easiest way to do it, but is that the best way? I guess what I was thinking I used to be in a relationship, and I went out and the woman I was living with was unemployed. She just moved there to come and be with me, and I was working outside the home, and I came home and we'd get into a fight every night. Every night we'd get in an argument. After a while the two of us sat down, and I said what's going on here? And I said, you know what the problem is is that I come in from work, I'm kind of stressed, I'm trying to come down from the day, and I come home and immediately you're talking to me and wanting to know how my day was and telling me how your day was. I think I need just a couple of minutes to come down here and just to decompress or whatever so, you know, I just developed the habit of I would just go in, I would take a quick shower, like five minutes, just to wash off, and that seemed to me to wash off the day. Then I'd come out and I was different, and I was fresh. Something was different, and we didn't get into our usual argument. So what's your usual pattern when you come home. You mentioned something, you've been changing that. What if you went for five minutes in the other room, just sat and watched TV or sat down and you know, in the other room, and then walked out . . .

F 55 Because I usually have dinner waiting for her on the table . . .

TH 86 And she gets there kind of late . . .

F 56 It's usually there. I'm not saying all the time . . .
TH 87 You want to have dinner.
M 25 It's usually because it's after six, so we'd like to have dinner by 6:30, 7:00 at least.
F 57 On occasions I don't do it.
TH 88 So, it's not go take a shower, go into the other room or whatever. What could you do differently when you first walk in. You've been working on this a bit. What could you do differently when you first walk in? Something different. That's not go clean up the things that they haven't done or go handle . . .
M 26 Well, I usually come in and I see these things. Well, I may go in and say hello, I do say hello, then I start in. Well, how come you didn't do this, or why isn't this done. But I usually go and change my clothes and get into comfortable clothes and then come out and either whatever he hasn't done for dinner I start to do.
F 59 She finishes it up.
M 27 And lots of times, sometimes, Thursday night is chicken night, so bring home chicken. Well, I walk in expecting the table to be set . . .
TH 89 And it's not set.
M 28 And it's not set. Well, you know, I've learned not to say anything more. Set the chicken on the table, go and hang up my coat, and go and get undressed, and then he may say, um, he's still watching TV or something, and I'll say, all right dinner's on the table. Let's get going, and then I'll take the plates down and set the table or whatever if she doesn't come out and do it. She's usually in on the computer playing on the computer.
TH 90 So you would like one of them to come out rather than you taking it, and you don't want to have to come home and start commenting on the things that are done, but you would love one of them to have it done while you are getting dressed or changing.
M 29 Yeah, that would be nice.
TH 91  That would be nice. But you tend to take it on yourself.
M 30  Yeah. I'm used to that.
TH 92  Yeah. Is that a good role or not a good role?
M 31  Depends on how you look at it. It's good for them, it's bad for me probably.
TH 93  Well, is that something you want to change though?
M 32  It would be nice to change, yes, that I wouldn't have to come home and say oh, let's get the dishes set or the table set. Especially when they know that I'm bringing home what I'm bringing home or else dinner.
TH 94  So some nights they do it and some nights they don't. Or some nights he does it or some nights does Pam do it?
M 33  Right. Some nights she does it.
TH 95  Without being reminded of it?
F 60  Yeah, sometimes she'll set the table on her own. The other night when the table was set she'd done that on her own. I don't know when it was, Monday?
TH 96  So, occasionally it happens. You'd like it to happen more consistently.
M 34  Right.
TH 97  All right. Because she is home a lot earlier than you are.
M 35  Yeah. I mean she likes to come home and unwind.
TH 98  You're there most of the day?
F 61  I'm there all day.
TH 99  All day, and so you would tend to just take it on and do it yourself, and that's not the greatest habit right? I guess I was wondering about that with your situation Pam. You know, I guess the thing that I would think is nature abhors a vacuum like if somebody steps in and does it, if you would set the table, I'd say, hey, I'm watching a show. This is a great deal. This is a good deal. I like that. If I won't have to think about taking a shower because I know my parents will say take
a shower, take a shower. Well, let them hassle me for a while and finally I will get
up and move when they get angry enough. You know obviously there have been
times when you've thrown up your hands and said forget it. I'm not going to care
like you said. I didn't care if she went to the wake. I didn't care. I wasn't attached
to it. Do you think that makes a difference. Do you think if you didn't, I mean, you
want to eat so that's a little difficult, but some of the other things. Do you think if
you just backed off and let them come forward do you think that would be better
or not?

F 62 It's all been tried.

TH 100 It has?

F 63 It's been tried.

TH 101 How so?

F 64 Two or three weeks there we didn't tell her to take a shower.

M 36 Oh, you're talking about Pam.

TH 102 Oh I was taking about him, too. He's thinking about her. I'm thinking, I
don't know. I'm talking about both of them myself. But okay.

M 37 No, I knew what you were getting at.

F 65 I was on the right train but in the wrong car.

TH 103 That's right, wrong car. No I think both cars. So, for a couple of weeks
you just decided forget it, we aren't going to remind her of a thing, and she didn't
really do all the stuff she was supposed to do.

F 66 She didn't do nothing of it.

TH 104 None of it?

F 67 None of it.

TH 105 So none of it was really important to her. It was more things that you
would have expected from her.

M 38 Yeah, just the every day. . .
TH 106  Like setting the table, like doing the shower, like whatever.

TH 107  Do you remember that time, Pam? Did you notice that they made that change? Did they tell you that they made that change? Or did they just stop doing it for a while?

D 21  Yes.

TH 108  And so what was different? How was that, good? Do you like the pressure off or not?

D 22  I like the pressure off.

TH 109  That was good. What didn't you like about it?

D 23  I didn't do the work that I was supposed to.

TH 110  All right, you didn't do it on your own.

D 24  Right.

TH 111  Do you think that if they had laid off for longer you would have finally sort of taken your own initiative or not?

D 25  Think so.

TH 112  Yeah, eventually. It would have been hard for them to last more than to the time when you finally got motivated.

D 26  Yeah.

TH 113  I remember when my wife had a cesarean section unexpectedly. We thought she was going to just have a regular birth, and so she was laid up in bed for a couple of weeks afterwards from the operation, and I remember I had teenage kids a the time and myself, and she finally sort of got out of bed and was moving around pretty well after about two weeks. She came out and she looked at the kitchen and living room and she said, I can't believe it. You guys are competent. The kitchen was clean, the living room was clean, but then what we figured out was I typically don't do the dishes until I can't find another fork. That's
when I know to do the dishes. That's the guy way. I don't know.

F 69 What does his name go?

TH 114 Tim Allen. There's no forks. I'll do the dishes. So, my wife would do the dishes when there was a fork in the sink, only one fork in the sink. That's when she knew to do the dishes.

M 39 That's the women's way.

TH 115 That's the women's way. And maybe it's individuals within that too, but I think that I didn't realize if she'll step in and do the dishes, it's okay with me generally. I'll go along with it, and maybe that's the man's way too. You ever see it at a party or a gathering or whatever. You're sitting around. Everybody is sitting around after Thanksgiving dinner and then you know the women start to get up and say we'll take the plate. Why do they do that? It could be the men too, but we oh yeah. We'll watch the game, you know? It's that kind of thing. Maybe it's partly our gender training, you know, trained as men and women, but nature does abhor a vacuum, and if you left her long enough, she probably eventually would take a shower, but it's hard to last through that time when she finally gets motivated and does it on her own because oh you're embarrassed or whatever it may be that she is not taking care of herself in the way that she could. So it's hard to last through that stuff. And she says she hates the pressure. That's how she clams up and walks away, and she gets kind of closed down.

M 40 I agree there, because sometimes we will find something that we both get on her case about, and I really feel like I've explained to her. I don't like to start in on her once her dad had started in and continue on.

TH 116 Yeah, sure.

M 41 And I told her that. I says I don't like to do this, but there are some things I have to say along with this, you know.

TH 117 Right.
M 42 And I've explained to her. I says you know I don't want to put two of us against one. That's not fair to her, so I try not to do that.

F 70 But she won't come up with the argument.

TH 118 No, I don't think she does. She clams up. That's her way of dealing with it.

F 71 That's it. She just clams up. She wants to go out. We say to get dressed and she doesn't want to get dressed. She'll say I don't want to get dressed. Well give me a reason why you don't want to get dressed. She won't. She just clams up and goes and mumbles and walks away.

TH 119 And then sometimes she just goes out.

M 43 She'll even bang drawers.

TH 120 Sometimes she gets mad. I've seen her get teary eyed.

F 72 Slam doors and slam drawers.

M 44 Yeah, that's our other problem is the tears, and I don't like to see her crying all the time.

TH 121 It's hard to watch your kid be in pain. It's hard to watch her get mad too. It's not fun for anybody I don't think.

M 45 Our typical thing is at breakfast.

TH 122 Yeah.

M 46 We can never wake up is what we're told. I am never awake at breakfast time.

TH 123 You're not awake?

M 47 No, her.

TH 124 Her, oh yeah. She still sleepy from the . . .

M 48 She's still sleeping . . .

TH 125 And if you didn't get her going, would she get to work?

M 49 I don't know. Her father is very, very nice and get up every single
morning for her and makes her her breakfast and her lunch.

TH 126 Right.

M 50 So all she has to do is get herself out of bed and get dressed.

TH 127 But I bet you help her get out of bed, too.

F 73 I'll get up, well no, not really. When I get up and I go to the bathroom and come out of the bathroom I'll say Pam, it's 7:00 or 6:00 whatever time it is for her to start getting up. Well that's all I'll give it to her.

TH 128 That's it?

F 74 That's it.

TH 129 Wait a minute. This isn't the Pam I've come to know and love.

F 75 That's it.

TH 130 You get up on your own?

F 76 But I won't leave her until she gives me an answer.

TH 131 Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

D 27 No, he comes in, he knocks on the door, 7:00. Okay. Bye.

TH 132 And then you get yourself up. Sometimes you're tired.

F 77 Twenty minutes later, half hour later.

TH 133 Right but she gets herself up. Wait a minute. Uh oh, there is a crack in your story here. There's a crack in your story. She gets herself up. Now, you know, I'm not saying don't make breakfast for her, don't make lunch. That's a nice thing to do. That's kind. I like that.

F 78 It gets me up early, rather than staying in the bed.

TH 134 Whatever. Okay that's fine. But it's an interesting things She doesn't do anything on her own? Wait a minute, you're alarm clock, you've told her to get up, and that's one thing. Maybe you wouldn't do that. Some other people wouldn't do it. They'd let her get a clock and get herself up, but again, that's a nice thing. But she's gotten herself up. That seems to work out all right.
It's a step in the right direction.

Well, I mean it's a step to recognize I think, you know. Because again she gets up and she gets herself going for work. Not everybody does. You know people who uh, I don't want to go in today. I'm going to call in sick, and you know, they don't. Maybe she's done that, but generally, she gets herself up and goes to work.

No, I think we've complimented her also when she goes out in the evening, but she comes home at a decent hour. She does come home at a decent hour.

She typically doesn't stay out all hours?

No, she's not out until four o'clock in the morning or anything like that.

And if something delays her, will she give a call?

No, that's the problem.

Then you would worry?

We've been worried.

I don't know, are you a parent?

Yep.

How old are your . . .

28, 26, 18 and 10.

Are they home?

The 10 year old is.

10 year old yeah. But I mean . . .

No, the other ones are gone.

Were they at home when they were older?

Yeah, sometimes. They came back and lived with us for a while.

And when they went out at night, you really don't go to sleep. You're sleeping, but you don't go to sleep.
Yeah, you worry about them, yeah.

Until that door closes. When they close the door and walk in the house...

When they could drive, that was the case for me.

Now you're out.

Yeah, well see she goes out by herself, and normally she comes home at 1:30 on Friday nights which is fine, you know, but when I wake up and it's 2:00, well then...

You would rather gotten a call.

Yeah, I, what happened. Then I'm not sleeping until she comes in. If it's 2:00 or 3:00...

So you'd rather she communicate a little more about that stuff, and Pam, you wouldn't want to call because you're afraid they'd get mad or tell you to come home, or what?

No.

Just a habit of not communicating again? All right. So they'd like to hear a little more about that. It would be one thing that we could change in a better direction. Okay?

And to tell us where she's going and like the other night...

Whoa, whoa, whoa, you got a reaction there.

Yeah.

To tell you where she's going because why? You're worried?

Well, so that in case something would happen I'd know where to look at least.

We understand plans change.

Right.

I mean I'm going to go here...
TH 153  But you'd like to generally know if she doesn't come home by 3:00 and you start to get worried and you have to call the police, at least you could give them a place to start. And they say where did your daughter go tonight, you say, I don't have a clue. You'd rather have some clue. And so, but you reacted when she said that about tell us where she's going. You don't want to have that kind of thing. It seems too controlling?
D 29  I don't know.
TH 154  Too much?
D 30  I wouldn't say controlling.
TH 155  And so you really reacted to that. I want to know what that reaction was.
D 31  I just looked up.
TH 156  She wants the privacy.
M 56  Granted she's 30. I mean she can go and do what she pleases. I mean I have no problem with that. She's old enough, but yet . . .
TH 157  You do worry as a parent.
M 57  It's a young lady that's out there driving a car by herself, and you hear so many stories, I mean, it's just . . .
TH 158  It's worrisome.
M 58  It's just the idea.
TH 159  But answer Pam if you can. What, you know, so what if you left in your room just on a piece of paper in case you didn't come home at a certain hour where you plan to go that night. Not even have to tell them but just left it written on a piece of paper.
D 32  No, I would rather tell them.
TH 160  Would you? But you don't want to tell them, or do you care? I don't quite, I don't know . . .
D 33 See, usually when I go out I go to my little restaurant which is ten minutes away and that's where I stay.

TH 161 The whole evening most of the time? All right. That's typically where you go, but if you go someplace else and they wouldn't know about it they'd be worried.

D 34 Yes.

TH 162 So, what do you think of that?

D 35 If I went somewhere else, I usually don't call because I'll go there and come back you know get there and get back quick so that I can get home on time.

TH 163 Right. And so, but I guess what I would say, what I heard from them is okay, if she's going to be later than like 1:30 we'd like to hear from her, but you typically don't call and so you know, what about that? Would you be willing to call?

D 36 Yes.

TH 164 Why not?

D 37 Yes.

TH 165 Yeah? Would you? I mean is this too much pressure . . .

F 93 She did for a while.

TH 166 She got into the habit of calling a lot more regularly than she . . .

F 94 No, because she wouldn’t stay out really too late before.

TH 167 But then after a while if she was going to be late, she would call you for a little while, but that sort of dropped out recently.

F 95 Yeah, well, not recently. It's a long time ago that she started.

M 59 A couple of years.

TH 168 A few years.

F 96 Quite a few years.

TH 169 Okay. And so . . .
F 97  We don't care where she goes. We don't really want to . . .
M 60  We care, but I mean we're not . . .
TH 170  You don't want to have to monitor every movement, but you would like
to know generally what are your plans? When are you going to be home for
dinner? When are you going to be later than 1:30? That kind of stuff is just the
basics that you would like to have from her. Okay. And so, she's saying I would be
willing to do some more of that. Now what about these times, we've got to finish
up pretty quickly, but what about these times when it's the three of you or two of
you and you two are trying to get some information out of her, and she is walking
away, and she is mumbling or she is slamming, you're slamming things. What about
these times? What could you do, what could we talk about here that might make
that just a little better, not perfect, we're not going for perfect, but just a little
better?
M 61  That would be nice. That would be a really nice thing.
F 98  I can't answer that because I usually don't get angry until she starts
banging or walking away and mumbling, and then you holler at her for it, but I
don't get angry until she starts banging, slamming drawers, slamming doors . . .
TH 171  When you hear anger it sort of punches your buttons and you get angry
back.
F 99  Oh yeah, oh yeah.
TH 172  Okay, so one of the things is if she's angry at you, how would you like
her, because she may, I mean, people in families get angry at one another.
F 100  She's allowed to get angry at me.
TH 173  So how would you like her to handle it a little differently than going and
banging the drawers? It isn't too big a leap for her.
F 101  All I want is a little communication.
TH 174  And what would that look like? Like if it were me and I was, and you
said something and somehow for some reason it punched my button and I got angry at you, how would you like me to handle it with you?

F 102 Are you her or are you me?

TH 175 No, yeah, I'm her.

F 103 Well, see I punch you're button by saying where're you going?

TH 176 And I'd get, oh, there they go again. There he goes again.

F 104 And you're walking away from me and mumbling. Now you start banging.

TH 177 Now what would you like me to do?

F 105 Instead of banging, I would rather you just turn around and say, I'm going so and so.

TH 178 Well, but what if I didn't want to tell you? What if I just got angry that you asked? How could I communicate to you that I was angry? Better than banging the drawers?

F 106 That I couldn't say. That I don't know.

TH 179 Do you have an idea? What would be better? It's not perfect. You'd rather she turn around and tell you where she's going.

M 62 Maybe, I'm going out and I'll be back at such and such a time.

TH 180 Well, what if she wasn't willing to do that? Like I think you're too much in my face and my life. Punch my buttons. I'm angry. You don't want me to go bang drawers, but somehow you want me to communicate to you in a different way, just to communicate to you.

F 107 That's all I want is to communicate to me, nothing else.

TH 181 So would you rather I say, look it, I really get angry when you ask me those things or when you put pressure on me.

F 108 I would probably turn around and say well where is the pressure? Why are you getting angry?
TH 182 Because you are asking me where I'm going and I hate that.
F 109 But I still don't see the pressure.
TH 183 It feels like pressure to me. You don't see it, but it feels like pressure to me.
F 110 See, now you're communicating with me. She's not. She doesn't do that.
TH 184 But that's what I'm asking. That's what I'm asking. Is that what you want a little more of. Even if she doesn't like what you do . . .
F 111 I don't like what she does. I would rather have that than the turning around, walking away, and mumbling under her breath and banging stuff around.
TH 185 Okay. Good. So, now I need to talk to Pam. I see the tears. So, the tears come when what? When we are talking about this stuff and the tears come, what goes on inside you with that? Do just tears come or is there feeling that goes on with that? Are you sad, scared, upset, what happens?
D 38 I don't know.
F 112 Am I lying?
D 39 No.
TH 186 No, no, I'm talking to Pam here. Butt out.
F 113 Sorry.
TH 187 Too much pressure for me. So you don't know the tears just start to come. So, you know, when I was just talking to our dad like that, you know, it's like hey, I don't like it when you put pressure on me. And he says where's the pressure? I say, I feel pressure. Whether you're putting it on me or not I feel it. I don't want you to ask me those questions. I get mad. Is that something you could ever say?
D 40 I don't know.
TH 188 That's a tough one, huh? That's a big leap. All right. So what do you think could be an alternative to somehow speak back to the pressure and, you
know, not go bang things around? What's a better alternative for you? Is that a good alternative for you?

D 41 Yeah.

TH 189 The going to bang things?

D 42 No.

TH 190 Then what do think is a way that would work better for you, not what they want?

D 43 Leave me alone for a while. Let me have five or ten minutes.

TH 191 Okay. Great. All right. So instead of going and banging things, she wants at that point to have some time by herself, and is she said that to you or to you, I need five ten minutes, instead of walking away and mumbling and banging, it wouldn't be what you wanted. You'd rather her tell you where she's going, but would that be better?

F 114 I would be happy with that.

TH 192 That would be better.

F 115 I would be happy with that.

TH 193 That would be a step in the right direction.

F 116 That's communication.

TH 194 That's communication rather than mumbling and walking away.

M 63 The only thing is is it a lie, or is it the truth?

TH 195 What do you mean? What do you mean?

M 64 When she is going to come back in five or ten minutes.

TH 196 Maybe she'd come back, maybe she wouldn't. But right now she needs five or ten minutes.

M 65 But I mean will she tell us a lie or will she tell us the truth?

TH 197 That is will she come back and tell you where she's going?

M 66 Yeah, will she tell us . . .
In five or ten minutes will she come back and say I'm not ready to talk yet or . . .

Will she tell us what we want to hear, or will she tell us the truth?

Oh, you mean after the five or ten minutes?

You see, we find her telling us things that she thinks we want to hear.

Like you've said, she might be afraid you'll disapprove, you'll be upset, you won't want her to do it, so either she won't talk to you and won't tell you, or she'll tell you something that she thinks you want to hear which isn't really what she's going to do or whatever it may be. Yeah, I don't know about that. That's a different question. That's a slightly different question, and it doesn't sound like we are going to solve that one tonight. I'm just saying can we make one step towards communication. One step. Just to change the old pattern. Just to turn back instead of mumbling, instead of going and slamming drawers, say that's pressure, I don't want to talk. Give me five or ten minutes.

That's fine. That's communicating to me.

That's a step in the right direction.

That's a step in the right direction.

It still doesn't handle telling you everything . . .

It's not telling me anything, but it's communicating to me. It's telling me something.

And you'd prefer that rather than walking away, mumbling, slamming drawers.

Slamming drawers, banging her fists against the wall.

That would be better?

Oh yeah.

And that's what I'm talking about. I think you know you said this has been going on for a long time. These habits have developed over a long time.
between all three or you really, and sometimes there is some difference. It's like going to the wake. Wow, that's great. And yeah it would be nice if you appreciated that about one another when he has cleaned the floor. It would be nice to be appreciated. When she's gotten ready for the wake on her own, or done something, gotten herself up on her own. It's nice when families appreciate one another, and that would be nicer to put a little more of that rather than the criticism. That's always nice for families, but all I'm saying is one little change you could do is just you know, they want you to tell them where you're going. Maybe you don't want to tell them that at this moment, but they definitely would like to hear, especially between the two of you when this typically happens, this kind of back and forth thing, I'm not going to talk to you now, I need five or ten minutes. I'm going away, I'm going to go think. I'm going to go in the other room or whatever. I'm just, I need five or ten minutes, back off. Yeah? You'd be willing to try this as an experiment?

D 44 Yes.

TH 206 Okay, now you can't be, at that point, you can't be saying now why won't you tell me? Why won't you communicate more?

F 122 No, no.

TH 207 For now you have to accept that.

F 123 For now I will accept that.

TH 208 It's a step in the right direction. I don't know if this happens between the two of you, but same thing.

M 69 Well, a lot of times I'll just walk away, unless I get really angry. But I mean if I don't get angry, I'll just, because I know what she's like and I just try to handle it and back off though I know there are times I don't do that. It depends on what situation is there.

TH 209 Not everybody is perfect at everything, and they'd like you to tell them a
little bit more beforehand what your plans are for the next day, whatever it may be, and call if you are going to be later than 1:30 on Friday nights or whatever. Maybe other times on the week nights. I don't know about that. Or maybe you don't out . . .

F 124 No, that's usually the latest she stays out is usually on a Friday night.

TH 210 But so if it's out of the routine they want to have a call, and they of course, want to know where you're going, but that's a different story.

D 45 Call and say I'm on my way home right now.

TH 211 Sure, that kind of thing. All right? So even if it wakes them up they prefer to know because you're going to be awake worrying anyway maybe. All right. So those little changes. I guess that's what I'm saying. If it's been this many years as a habit, starting to make those little changes and also starting to notice when things go a little better, that's good, and starting to notice when she takes initiative on her own. I think she's doing it in a lot of areas that I probably haven't even heard about.

F 125 Yeah, she has, and we do tell her lately.

M 70 Well, you know, knowing that we were coming here this week . . .

TH 212 May have changed things.

M 71 She has been excellent.

TH 213 You've been in a model family. It's like you floss more before you go to the dentist, is that it?

F 126 Pretty close to it.

TH 214 Okay, we are making an appointment every week for you three until the habits change.

M 72 When I came in the door she said, oh mom, hi. How was your day? Put her arms around me and walked me to her bedroom.

TH 215 Okay, you have an imaginary appointment with me every week, and you
better be on your best behavior from now on.

M 73  In fact, I've even commented to her, to him, the changes that I've seen all week.

F 127  It's been at least a week, a little more than a week.

M 74  She knows that we're coming here.

TH 216  That's great, that's great. I love it. I love it. It shows that things can change.

F 128  There's a motive behind it.

TH 217  And that's great. That's good, that's good. I like that motivation. That's a good motivation, but what it say to me is that things can change. That's what it says to me. But every one of you are capable of doing some slightly different things to make things go a little better, and so if you want, you know, my assessment, I've gone around with my little stethoscope, there is a good heart beat in this family. There is a lot of love, and there is potential for change. You've changed some, and if you take it a little at a time and take some steps, I think you are headed in the right direction.

F 129  Yeah whatever therapy . . .

TH 218  All right. So, that's about all I have to say. Any other questions or things that I didn't ask about that I should have asked about. I mean, we don't have too much time, but just high points. Anything that is pretty crucial that I didn't ask about or you didn't get a chance to tell me?

M 75  It's all, we're always saying her. With a little more appreciation of the things her dad does for her. He doesn't have to get up every morning.

TH 219  You would like to hear a little more back to him. Again, a little more communication, but that positive communication would be even nicer.

M 76  Well, you know, he'll ask for her to get a can of pop, and sometimes she just doesn't want to do it for him.
F 130  I've told her, tell me.

TH 220  You'd like more communication, even if she doesn't do it. You'd like more . . .

F 131  I'd rather her tell me I don't want to do it than to get up, mumble, cuss, and go down and get me the pop and bang the doors and bang the can, and bang stuff around. I'd rather have her say I don't want to do it.

TH 221  Even though you'd prefer she did it, even though it would be nice if . . .

F 132  Who doesn't like to be waited on.

TH 222  Sure, right. But you would prefer her to just stand up a little more and say no.

F 133  If that's what she feels.

TH 223  No I don't want to talk, no I don't want to get the can of pop for you.

F 134  Yes.

TH 224  And she's said she'd be willing to practice a little on the no I don't want to talk right now.

F 135  And I've told her that I don't know how many times. Just tell me no.

TH 225  But again that's pressure. That's pressure for her.

F 136  Just tell me no.

TH 226  She is going to learn to say no to the pressure at first, and she can practice on that and maybe she will expand that out to other areas.

M 77  But I just feel that a little more appreciation for the things that he does for her.

TH 227  You would like more of that and maybe you too. I sounds like you do a lot of things as well.

F 137  We all do our share. She does her share.

TH 228  Sure.

F 138  When she's pushed into it.
Oh, when she's motivated or when she's pushed into it, or sometimes on her own.

Yeah.

Okay.

Sometimes we go away for the weekend and she's left home alone, and she has the wash to do and she's got to clean up and that, but I know these are things that she leaves to the very last minute, and we can't . . .

I do them on Saturday.

And the wash does not get done like that.

No, it takes a little time. But . . .

But she does get it done.

She does get it done. Typically she gets it done.

She does get things done.

All right. Because we are pretty much out of time, I just want to ask all three of you this question. How was this conversation for you? Was it what you expected? How did it feel? Was it okay? Just a few quick impressions. Maybe it will take you a little while to sort it out, but . . .

All I can say is it's okay. I mean, I had no idea what to expect. I've never been to anything like this before. I've never, and I don't know what's what. So, I . . .

Okay.

**Treatment Plan for this Family**

In the next and subsequent meetings with the family, I would follow up on my inquiries about times when the daughter has gotten herself ready on her own steam without being reminded or being hassled about it (like getting herself to
work other activities). I would also find out whether the daughter has been telling her father that she isn’t willing to talk to him and whether he has stopped pursuing her if she has spoken up. In addition, I would be interested in hearing from the family members what they might have found the most helpful and least helpful in the previous meeting and what, if anything, had stood out for them in the previous conversation or during the intervening period.

To Learn More About Solution Oriented Family Therapy

BOOKS


WEBSITE

The homepage for Bill O’Hanlon is PossiBill@aol.com http://brieftherapy.coin
1. The focus in Solution Oriented Family Therapy is on
   1. the family structure.
   2. client affect.
   3. present and future.
   4. past.

2. Among the values that O’Hanlon espouses for family therapy is (are)
   1. seeing the family in context.
   2. standing against approaches which he thinks are disrespectful or ineffective.
   3. being able to work effectively with everybody.
   4. all of the above.

3. O’Hanlon sees therapy as having two parts. They are
   1. acknowledgment and change.
   2. insight and change.
   3. respect and confrontation.
   4. recognition and reflection.

4. O’Hanlon looks for three areas of change in the family. These are
   1. behavior, affect and cognition.
   2. viewing, doing and context.
3. system, structure and relationship.

4. caring, sharing and future orientation.

5. O’Hanlon calls his form of family therapy “Possibility Theory” because
   1. it is strictly a positive approach.
   2. it is more than a positive approach.
   3. liabilities, problems and possibilities are all intertwined.
   4. both b anc c.

6. One of the way that O’Hanlon provides acknowledgment in the session is by
   1. agreeing with the family members.
   2. speaking for individual family members.
   3. letting each family member tell his or her story in turn.
   4. all of the above.

7. When someone in the family is identified as “bad” or badly intentioned,
   O’Hanlon describes this as a
   1. threat.
   2. family dysfunction.
   3. blaming idea.
   4. reaction formation.

8. Challenging non-accountability or ideas that invalidate a family member are part of
1. changing the viewing.
2. initiating behavioral changes.
3. joining with the family.
4. rebuilding a strong family structure.

9. Factors such as gender patterns, or family culture are part of the
1. system.
2. context.
3. doing.
4. structure.

10. The first of four stages in Solution-Oriented Family Therapy is
1. the family genogram.
2. understanding context.
3. joining with the family.
4. searching for possibilities.

11. One factor that O’Hanlon believes is not necessary for change is
1. knowing why you do the things that you do.
2. changing how you view what is going on in the family.
3. changing blaming ideas.
4. changing the idea of non-accountability or determinism.

12. In terms of influencing the family, O’Hanlon believes that
1. family therapists should not try to influence the family at any time
2. family therapists should absolutely try to influence the family during therapy.

3. one cannot not influence in therapy.

4. both b and c.

13. O’Hanlon uses the metaphor of a log jam to convey the idea that

1. a small change may be all that is necessary to get the family on track.

2. family problems pile up and create more problems.

3. each family member needs to individuate.

4. all of the above.

14. One of the ways O’Hanlon sees himself as indirectly influencing the family is through his

1. directives for new behavior.

2. careful attending to their issues.

3. positive expectations for change.

4. suggestions.

15. The third stage in Solution Oriented Family Therapy is

1. acknowledgment.

2. changing the viewing.

3. changing the doing.

4. reinforcement.

ANSWERS:
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