

EPILOGUE

Affirming Changes of Growth



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The material presented in this book has been organized with the criteria for a good theory proposed by Haley in *Beyond the Double Bind*. By his definition, a good theory should comprehensively and clearly articulate the causes of failure, the components of healthy functioning, and the actions required of therapists to promote realistic hope and a successful outcome. The presenting problems articulate patients' sense of failure and confusion, and the commands explain their lack of growth. The permissions delineate the components of healthy functioning. The later chapters define the actions required of both patients and therapists.

When patients are ready to graduate from the therapeutic relationship, the five statements articulating the presenting problem are now replaced with the following conclusions, which represent the working through to understanding and the resultant healthy functioning:

1. My parents and I had a psychopathologically symbiotic relationship in which we rescued each other for the purpose of maintaining a mutual psychological dependency. I will never be able to take responsibility for their psychological needs. I had a right to feel angry about the impinging nature of our

relationship, but now I can feel some compassion and forgiveness for their psychological vulnerability and my resulting complementary limitations.

2. I now understand that my parents became unhappy with my progress because they could see my growth only as an abandonment of them. The more I accomplish, the more pain they will feel until I satisfactorily separate from them. Then they may be able to feel limited pride. I must learn to validate myself for the work I have done.
3. I was taught not to express anger at my parents directly. Therefore, I could only express my anger indirectly by refusing to act in ways that I thought would allow my parents to feel proud of me, even if that meant blocking my own progress.
4. I have been so busy caring for my parents' psychological incompleteness that I have little motivation for my own life. Also, I feared consequences to them and myself if I went on with my life.
5. I now understand that I am entitled to my own separate existence. My parents must assume responsibility for their psychological incompleteness. They will not die, and neither will I. I have been conditioned to feel anxious about going on with life, but I will no longer let this feeling impede my growth. I leave home as a separate and different individual. I see my parents as more capable than they let on to improve the quality of their own life without me. I believe they will benefit psychologically from my departure.