

## Case Study – Marriage & Family Counseling Treatment Paper

James (38) and Linda (30) have been married for 10 years. They have three children: Bob age 9, Joy age 7, Rick age 5. The couple initially presented with issues of anger (Linda) and communication problems, and Rick was not adjusting well to kindergarten. Linda has been unhappy and unsure about what to do next in life, now that her youngest has started full-day schooling and she is home alone. James came to appease his wife and is fairly disengaged.

Bob is a responsible boy who is rarely in trouble. He is confident and plays baseball in the summer. Joy is a bit spoiled and demanding at home as the only girl, but she seems to enjoy and do well at school. Rick is the problem child and has a hard time concentrating and following directions at school; he involves himself in nearly every minor dispute among his classmates, making things worse. Rick is also disobedient at home, almost intentionally so, even though he screams and carries on when punished. He is worse when James is home. He often hits his siblings and starts fights, and then runs to James for lenient treatment. James and Linda often disagree over whether to crack down on Rick's behavior.

Linda is the middle child of 3 kids who had few responsibilities as a child. She was well-behaved and received very little attention since her older sister was talented and successful academically, and her younger brother was a star athlete; Linda just drifted into the background and learned early on that she didn't really count in life. She dropped out of college in her second year at age 20 to marry James. Her mother and grandmother, who live nearby with their husbands, modeled and taught that a woman is happiest if she is at home raising her children. However, at this point in her life, Linda is not sure if it has been worth it, and feels entitled to do something for herself.

James is the oldest of 5 kids and had a weak, ineffectual mother who was often sick and needed the care of others, so James took charge of the kids, and was especially close to his youngest sibling, a sister who is 10 years younger than him. James cannot remember being close to either parent. His father worked two jobs to make ends meet and while his parents rarely fought, he also does not remember them being overly affectionate. James has a degree in accounting and is a mid-level manager at a bank, working hard to get a promotion to vice president.

In session, James and Linda have a hard time agreeing on just about everything. Linda does most of the talking and does a lot of criticizing and mind-reading. She especially complains that James does not help around the house with the kids, and when he does try, she criticizes his quality of work. James remains detached due to this "damned if you do, damned if you don't."

James and Linda report that their first 3 years of marriage were quite good; James ran the finances and major household decisions and Linda became pregnant six months after the wedding. They often played tennis together, went on walks, and enjoyed playing bridge with friends on Saturday night. They had a "fun" marriage, but it was more functional than intimate. Things got harder when Joy, a difficult baby, was born. Linda's mother and grandmother both tried to help, but James resented their constant presence because it made him and Linda seem incompetent. However, James does seem to relate well to Linda's maternal grandfather.

In the fourth session Linda came alone and reported that she had discovered that James had been hiding a 2-year part-time affair with a college girlfriend who lives two states away. It was mostly an emotional affair, but apparently they had sex on 3 or 4 occasions when she joined him in another city on several of his banking trips. James had argued that Linda had ignored him for years and it was "no big deal;" she accused him of betrayal and ruining their marriage.

You are planning session 5 and beyond. James has agreed to come back to counseling.