



## DVD Review

# Behind Closed Doors: Two Therapy Sessions with Moshe Lang

Moshe Lang, PsychOz Publications, Australia 2012

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An early defining characteristic of family therapy was its willing embrace of emerging audio-visual technology, to foster accountability and to explicate the processes of our work. About 30 years ago, I was involved with others in publishing commentaries on an acclaimed series of family interviews by Moshe Lang, after a mother and daughter had attempted suicide. Later the family had very generously allowed the tapes to be released.

Now Moshe, one of our most experienced and respected therapists, returns to his theme of making our work transparent by demonstration and thereby open to review. This time he uses a professional film crew and actors. Pictures and sound are good quality; the acting is nuanced and credible. He conducts two simulated initial interviews – a discovered affair; an adult son and his mother repeatedly clashing after his return home – with a DVD for each with later remarks by him and the actors in role, plus a booklet containing the full transcripts with his commentary. He also adds a series of ingeniously constructed exercises to enhance analysis of each interview.

It would be misleading to imply the package should most benefit therapists entering conjoint work, even though it is a marvellous resource for them. We all need periodic safety checks to ensure we're roadworthy, and the simulations give more than ample opportunity to reflect on the staples of our own current practice and where we could lift our performance. Moshe has spent his adult life in perfecting his craft, which is highly deceptive in its characteristic veneer of simplicity and economy. Apart from the quality of thought based on reading, professional experience and wisdom, his work is masterly in the gentle precision and humaneness with which he uses language, acknowledgement and lines of questioning to develop a shared, respectful and inclusive world of meanings, which are systematically tested and built upon to explore options for happier lives.

Thirty years on, he's somehow mellower, more comfortable, more present and even more exact in the way he develops therapeutic alliances. His interventions grow from the carefully negotiated and unfolding expression of those present. Unproductive probes are seamlessly dropped and re-directed, in a prevailing atmosphere of calm acceptance no matter how painful the topic. His theory and personal views don't readily show; they are subsumed to the task of understanding respective viewpoints and promoting the dignity and agency of each person. Both interview scenarios are loaded with the possibilities for therapeutic disaster through unhelpful alignments or destructive escalations. It's instructive to note the multiplicity of petit point steps through which he avoids these and encourages hopefulness, shared understanding and mutual respect. And what also becomes clearer here is how his method of delivery subtly and incrementally gives him more room to think, plan and engage.

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Finally, I was taken by the cinematic device of showing the people entering (though not leaving) the building. This physical transition between daily life and therapy is of great interest to me. We all encounter sometimes challenging aspects of it, but I'm unaware of any published formal research on the subject.

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