

Comments from Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Marriage & Family Therapists

The sophistication and depth of the *Powerful Non-Defensive Communication* paradigm Sharon Strand Ellison has developed can be of immense value to psychologists. The theory transforms our concepts of power in human interactions. Both Sharon's theory and practice challenge psychologists to expand their own awareness and knowledge and enhance their capacity to pass skills learned on to the patients.

—Dr. Gisela Bergman, Licensed Psychologist, Eugene, OR

I believe this is the most powerful structure I've learned in my training as a marriage and family therapist. It has tremendous implications for most human interactions.

—Bette Acuff, Ph.D., M.A., San Francisco, CA

Sharon has continued to advance and perfect her concepts of the nature of emotional maladaptation and has developed her method of working with disturbed persons toward an ever-increasing level of refinement. She has shown a special aptitude in coping with people showing problems of extreme dependency and self-destructiveness and has succeeded where many psychotherapists would have given up. She has conducted many workshops that are of her own unique style based on ideas and theory coming out of her inventiveness and creativity.

—Dr. Reid Kimball, Psychiatrist, Eugene, OR

I just finished your book, *Taking the War Out of Our Words*. It is chock-full of smarts. I just want to congratulate you on producing a tour de force, which I pray I could influence all my clients to read. It is a reference book that keeps on giving. It picks up where the Murray Bowen (family systems) thinkers leave off. You provide tools to understand what it means to create boundaries, to differentiate and grow up, becoming one's own agent of authority, able to express self in a manner that is honest, appreciative, respectful, and dignifying.

—Shel J. Miller, Ph.D. Psychologist, Boston, MA

Thanks so much for your clarity, commitment, compassion, and sensitivity. I appreciate the way you walk your talk and your warmth—a great coach and role model.

—*Sandra Lewis, Psychologist, Berkeley, CA*

Ms. Ellison provided on-going training in play therapy for the psychologists and other staff at the Child Center. She is a skilled therapist who is able to combine interpretive feedback with skill training, role-playing, and limit setting. She is intuitive, insightful, and supportive and is well liked by children and staff alike. Besides being a highly competent therapist, she is also an excellent trainer and teacher.

—*Dr. Susan Richter, Psychologist, The Child Center, Eugene, OR*

Being aware of one's feelings and reactions to clients is one of the cornerstones of a therapist's training. Newer paradigms of countertransference also distinguish between feelings that arise from the therapist's own history versus those that may be evoked by the client. Through metabolizing or working through their own feelings, therapists can use this understanding to help the clients. Sharon Ellison's analysis of defensive communications can be a key to helping therapists understand the feelings the client invokes in both ourselves and others. Her methods of non-defensive communications allow the therapist to quickly work through countertransference feelings and more importantly, provide the tools for communicating to the patient in ways that are most likely to be heard. Ms. Ellison's workshop provides techniques and experience in changing countertransference feelings into helpful interventions for the client. While techniques are frequently discussed in theoretical terms, this workshop provides not only a theoretical paradigm but also a valuable experience and practice—something that is all too frequently missing in post-graduate workshops.

—*Mary Krentz, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist in Private Practice in Oakland, CA; Assistant Professor at the Wright Institute, Berkeley, CA, 1989-2001*

I found Sharon's presentation fascinating and extremely relevant to my work not only as a divorce mediator but also as a coach in collaborative divorce. I was able to apply her non-defensive communication techniques immediately in the next four-way meeting between coaches and clients and the clients responded very positively—it was very exciting!! I look forward to taking more of Sharon's workshops.

—*Debbie Katz MFT, Collaborative Practice Group of Contra Costa County*

I signed up for Sharon Ellison's PNDC Level One Training ... What I came away with is the foundation for a new way of communication, which I believe, has the potential to be transformational in any relational context, professional or personal.

Sharon's style is warm, engaging, humorous, and inclusive. She has a wonderful way of tailoring the workshop to address the needs of those present. She is a gifted story teller, and uses stories to demonstrate the incredible difference that can occur when a person uses PNDC. She was patient and kind in guiding us through our first bumbling attempts at using PNDC skills. I would love for all of my collaborative divorce colleagues to be trained by Sharon in PNDC, as I believe it would be enormously useful in our work with families. PNDC provides a structure to have difficult conversations without engaging in posturing and increased hostility. Couples can learn to reach peaceful resolutions and relax their vigilance about winning and losing.

—*Emily Weaver, MFT, Oakland, CA*

Many clients come to see me dealing with life situations and transitions that are extremely stressful. Helping clients deal both with their stress and the concomitant anxiety that results from these life situations is critically important. Since one major antidote to anxiety is information, I find that in informing clients about non-defensive vs. defensive communication adds an effective communication skill set that helps to reduce their anxiety. For clients to feel more *effective* and empowered to confront their challenges leads to them feeling more competent and confident.

Being able to offer both the information as well as the practice skills of non-defensive communication has increased my success in couple and family therapy. Learning this skill has also improved my therapy practice. I am noticing that, in some cases, behaviors I may have interpreted as client resistance, I am now seeing as defensive reactions resulting from how I have communicated to the client. With non-defensive communication I find my clients better able to respond to my interventions and interpretations. I highly recommend Sharon's training for psychologists as well as other mental health professionals.

—*Marc Berke, Ph.D., Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist; Collaborative Divorce Mental Health Professional; Director, Diablo Counseling Associates, Danville, CA.*