

# How to Work with Clients Who Blame

## Module 6: How to Help Clients Shift from a Blaming Mindset to a Growth Mindset

### Part 2: How to Prevent Resentment and Guide Clients to Growth

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## How to Work with Clients Who Blame: How to Help Clients Shift from a Blaming Mindset to a Growth Mindset

### How to Prevent Resentment and Guide Clients to Growth

**Dr. Buczynski:** Blame can often center around the need for others to give us what they're not giving us.

So how can we help clients come to terms with the idea of life-changing disappointment?

Dr. Michael Yapko once worked with two clients, a father and daughter, who were part of the family business. But the father had a deep longing, a dream that was being crushed right in front of his eyes. And it was the daughter doing the crushing.

You see, the father wanted his daughter to take over the business. But it was more than that. He wanted his daughter to *want* to take over the business. As is often the case in these situations, the daughter had other ideas for her life. And this didn't sit well with her dad.

So the difficult work here was trying to shift a very legitimate longing to a place of acceptance. And this had to happen before blame set in and ruined everything.

**Dr. Yapko:** I had a session with the two of them, and I spoke about the desire of Dad to pull his daughter into the business and make it hers, and I could reinforce that that's a reasonable thing; he'd spent his lifetime building up his business, he's used to having his family be a part of it, and this is his only child and he wants her to have it.

But the message that I really wanted to get across to him was "You can't make someone care about the things that you care about."

Now, to just say to him, "You can't make your daughter care about this" isn't going to go anywhere, because he's invested in the idea that he *can* make her care, that he can guilt her into "What's going to happen to the family name if you don't take over this business? And how can you do this to me when I've spent my whole life doing this?" and all those kinds of things.

"The message that I really wanted to get across to him was, ***You can't make someone care about the things that you care about.***"

So it became a pretty clear therapeutic goal of *How am I going to help this man reach a level of acceptance that his daughter cares about things that he doesn't care about: that his daughter wants a life that's different from the one he has envisioned for her?*

**Dr. Buczynski:** Michael legitimized and validated the father's desire. This helped him to feel that his needs were heard. And it allowed him to be more open to what Michael was going to suggest next.

**Dr. Yapko:** It was a really good opportunity to calm him down and invite him to just focus internally for a little while – call it hypnosis, call it a guided meditation, but I started to orient him to the idea of what it's like to grow up in a family with expectations.

I told a series of stories in hypnosis about a father who wants his son to be an athlete when his son doesn't particularly want to be an athlete, and another story of parents who want their daughter to be a physician when their daughter doesn't really want to be a physician – and just went on with that kind of parent/child

dynamic. Then expanded it into what happens when your *boss* has this expectation, and starts grooming you for a promotion that you really don't want.

After about 15 minutes, he sat up and he was much calmer and in a better place to be able to talk about the fact that you don't have the ability to make someone care about things that you don't care about, and you can't control the way someone else feels, and you can't – by definition someone else's feelings are out of your control.

**Dr. Buczynski:** So by helping his client gradually start to turn his focus inward, Michael was able to begin setting him on a path toward acceptance.

But Michael wanted to further drive home the point, the point that trying to change another person is virtually impossible.

So he gave the father a rather unconventional assignment.

**Dr. Yapko:** The assignment I gave him was to go out and try and control the uncontrollable.

“The assignment I gave him was to go out and try and control the uncontrollable.”

“I want you to go out in your front yard and spend ten minutes doing a rain dance and try and make it rain. And I want you to then, later that day, I want you to spend 15 minutes trying to control the stock market by focusing, getting your mental energy focused on the stock market.”

I gave him a series of things of trying to control the uncontrollable.

**Dr. Buczynski:** This helped to reinforce the idea of expectations and the futility of trying to change others.

When the father and daughter returned for their next session, Michael upped the stakes even further . . .

**Dr. Yapko:** “Now I want you to move from trying to make it rain and trying to control the stock market to trying to control other people's feelings. So I want you to post some things on Facebook that are outrageous things, ridiculous things that you want people to sign onto – like ‘I want all frying pans to be green – how many of you are with me?’ – things like that, that make it abundantly clear that, if you *really* cared about green frying pans, you'd be pretty unhappy at the lack of response to that.”

**Dr. Buczynski:** The point was made. Michael was able to help the father gradually warm to the idea of giving his daughter the space to be herself and to support her the best he could.

And the growth came when the father could finally see a different way forward for the family business.

**Dr. Yapko:** So we then started to develop a plan for how he could get an attorney that would help him sell the business over time – that it would be something he could slowly build a platform for doing that, and get the pressure off of her, and support her in choosing what she wants to choose.

It wasn't easy for him, by any stretch of the imagination, but his head was in the right place ultimately at wanting what was best for his daughter. It was just helping him to get there

**Dr. Buczynski:** Ok, so let's just quickly review **how Michael was able to help this family move from blame to growth:**

1. He validated the father's longing to have his daughter carry on the family business.
2. He offered other examples of similar family dynamics.
3. He gave him assignments that helped him realize the impossibility of controlling the uncontrollable, like his daughter's feelings.
4. Once the father could reach a level of acceptance, he could help him develop a new action plan for the business.

I hope this program has helped you think about new ways to approach clients who struggle with blame and a tendency to try and change other people.

We've heard many expert insights and strategies, and looked at several ways to help you use some of these ideas in your work with your clients.

Please be sure to check out the bonus sessions that we included here, as I think they can further help you in your work with clients who blame.

In the bonus sessions, we'll look at how to work with blame that's connected to obsessive compulsive disorder. We'll also go step by step with Peter Fonagy to see how he helps restore a blamer's ability to mentalize. We'll also look at one method to help clients replace their ineffective coping strategies for blame. And then we'll get into how the practitioner can avoid getting caught up in the client's blaming stance.

Along with these bonus videos we've also included some bonus handouts to help you in your practice. We've given you so many ways to get all up to date and "session-ready" when it comes to working with blame.

If you'd like to learn more about expert ways to work with some of the most common problems we see in our work with clients, please check out some of our other courses at [www.nicabm.com](http://www.nicabm.com).

Thanks for participating in this program. And thank you again for all the important work that you do.

I'll see you soon.