

Deanna Melillo-Degia

Assessment: Deanna(18), Debbie(47) and Richard(56) present for therapy, Debbie complains of a decrease in a quality relationship with her daughter (Deanna), she says that they are not as close as they used to be and she wants to know why. Deanna expresses that she has been angry with her mom and distant with her because she feels “jipped”, as if Debbie took the chance to have a “normal family” away from her and her father (Debbie’s ex husband Richard). Debbie started dating Dave and Deanna wants to know if it was “worth it” to divorce her father, just to start dating someone (Dave) with severe mental health issues instead. Debbie feels frustrated and insulted because her daughter can't accept the divorce, nor Dave and can only see her father's side of the story. Deanna verbally expresses that she feels the divorce was “unfair” and doesn't believe it was the “just” thing to do, she feels entitled to a proper intact family unit and doesn't feel she was given that, therefore she holds a debt over her mom's head. This now results in a strain on their once very close relationship. Debbie feels she is owed forgiveness and peace over her decision to divorce her father and date Dave and believes Deanna is being unfair as well. When asking Richard how he feels about everything that is going on, he struggles with expressing his feelings but states they could have had a nice family if Dave wasn't around and that Debbie will have to deal with the decision she made to divorce him since he didn't deserve that. This is the usual language Richard uses surrounding the topic, thus furthering Deanna's feelings of her mom being her debtor.

Goal: To develop mutual commitment to a fair balance of entitlements and indebtedness, while decreasing interactions based on expectation that results in conflict between all family members.

Intervention: Listen to Deanna, Debbie and Richard equally, objectively and non-judgmentally, without offering advice or any input, all while maintaining a stance of the utmost empathy. Second I would offer interpretations and insight by analysing what they are saying through the lens of their entitlements, and indebtedness. Lastly, working through by translating the insight into adjustments or alterations they can start making after realising all parties involved may be projecting an expectation on another that may not be entirely fair itself, and thus helping the family change its behavior. I could also use eliciting to help everyone in the family to reinterpret past events that happened and figure out new ways of moving forward and reconciling with each other.