

Case example:

Bud: 14, truanting, depressed, smoking pot, can't get up on time for school; 2 sisters: 11, 17; Mom, Dad

Mother to Minuchin: Our big problem is that Bud refuses to get out of bed in the morning and be where he is supposed to be.

Minuchin to Bud: Tell me, Bud, are you a night person? Do you stay up late?

Bud to Minuchin: Not real late. It's just in the morning that I don't feel like doing anything.

Minuchin to Bud: If you had a good alarm clock, would that help?

Mother to Minuchin (interrupting): Well, he has one alarm clock of his own, and I gave him one, and when those don't get him up, I have to go into his room to arouse him.

Minuchin to Bud: So you have 3 alarm clocks; two are the mechanical kind and the 3rd is human, your mother.

Bud to Minuchin: Yeah, that is true. I have two alarm clocks: one is my own, and I have second alarm clock that my mother gave me.

Minuchin to Bud: And are you certain that your mother is not an alarm clock as well?

Bud to Minuchin: No, my mother is not an alarm clock?

Minuchin to Bud: Are you certain about that? Are you certain that your mother is not an alarm clock as well?

Bud to Minuchin: Yeah

Minuchin to Bud: Who wakes you up most of the time?

Bud to Minuchin: My mother.

Minuchin to Bud: Then she is an alarm clock!

Mother to Minuchin: If you want to call it that.

Minuchin to mother: Okay, so you have a function. You are an alarm clock!

Mother to Minuchin: Well, we have 2 alarm clocks in his bedroom at this time....

Minuchin: And they both don't work?

Mother to Minuchin: And me.

Minuchin to Bud: Maybe you could get a 3rd alarm clock and stagger them: one at 7:30, one at 7:40, and one at 7:50.

Mother to Minuchin: That's what we do now.

Minuchin to Bud: My goodness! You must be a very deep sleeper, Bud.

Bud to Minuchin: Yeah.

Minuchin to Bud: What's the latest you have been able to keep sleeping?

(Bud looks at mother)

Minuchin to Bud: "Don't ask her. That is not her function. She's an alarm clock. Is she also a memory bank?"

Bud to Minuchin: I don't know.

Minuchin to father: When do you wake up for work?

Father to Minuchin: (looking to wife for answer): Five AM

Minuchin to father: Is your wife the memory bank for the entire family?

Father to Minuchin: Yeah

Minuchin to father: Your wife is a very busy person. She is an alarm clock and a memory bank.

(Minuchin then tracks the father's work situation, specifically the father's exceptional managerial skills.)

Minuchin to father: So you are a person who knows about time, schedules, and responsibility. You have worked all your life?

Father: Yes.

Minuchin to father: How is it, then, that you have a kid that doesn't know about time, schedules, and motivation. How did you manage this?

Father to Minuchin: I don't know. That's what we can't figure out.

Minuchin to father: Something failed.

Father to Minuchin: Yes

Minuchin explores the father's modeling of work ethics for son and if son would like to be like his father. Son says he would like to be like his father.

Minuchin to Bud: You would like to work in the same place as your dad? Have you been there with him?

Bud to Minuchin: Yeah (mother nods in agreement)

Minuchin to Bud: You see, you did not look at mom this time, and she still activated herself. You know she's wired to you people. And since, you did not look at her, Bud, there are some **invisible** wires that run from you to mom.

Mother to Minuchin: I guess so, yeah.

Minuchin to Bud: “How old are your sisters?”

Bud: “I don’t know.” (*Bud looks to father for help*)

Mother: “11 & 17”

Minuchin to Bud: “You operate both of them. Very good.

Minuchin to family: Now that was beautiful, because Bud looked at dad and activated him, and mother activated herself. Beautiful. Very invisible, but very strong wires.

Minuchin to Bud: So, 11 and 17. Your younger sister is really much older than you are. How long will you be the baby? Until you are 50? Until you are 20? I don’t know, some families keep babies for a long time.”

Bud to Minuchin: “I don’t know.”

Minuchin to Bud: “Ask your mother how long you will be the baby.”

Bud to mother: How Long?

Mother to Bud: Until you grow up.

Minuchin to Bud: Ah, that can be a lifetime. You can be 70 and still be the baby. You know, check to see what she means by that. How long will that take? You know, mothers have special

arithmetic. Check with your mother about what is her arithmetic. How long will you be the baby?

Mother to Bud: How Long will you be the baby? Until you accept responsibility, which I'm willing to give you, and when you accept responsibility for yourself, then I would consider you grown.

Minuchin to bud: Do you agree with that? Is it only up to you to grow up?

Bud to mother: Why are you putting all the responsibility on me?

Mother to Bud: Because it's your life. I am willing to guide, but I would like you to assume the responsibility.

Minuchin to Bud: Bud, I know people who are wired like your mom is wired to you— so closely wired that you don't get too much space. In other families, people who are wired as you are wired keep young for a long time.

Minuchin to the family: Extraordinary! Isn't that wonderful, with families, how they get wired?

Minuchin to Mother: So do you hear vibes?

Mother to Minuchin: I guess so, yeah.

Minuchin to Mother: Have you always been like that, wired to people?

Mother to Minuchin: Well I guess so. Because I've always been responsible for people.

Minuchin to Parents: So you two are really very responsible people. Dad, you are responsible to provide for the family, and, Mom, you are responsible to care for the kids. Let's think together how such responsible people have created such an irresponsible son.

In the rest of the session, Minuchin focuses on the father. Minuchin explains that he is concerned about mother: she is too ready to be available to people, and that cannot be good for her. She's too wired to others; the father must provide the wire cutters that will rescue her.

It is up to father to get mother to become wired to him. She is overemployed as a mother because she is underemployed as a wife.

