

# **Working With “Impossible” Cases: *Effective Interventions to Help Clients Previously Unmoved by Treatment***

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*Presenter:* Dr. Barry Duncan

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Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Time: 9:00am - 4:00pm

Location: Radisson Hotel - Corning, NY

We have all encountered clients who remained unmoved by treatment. These “veterans” evoke a mixture of compassion and exasperation that can blend to a belief of “impossibility.” “Therapy Veterans,” in some ways, are casualties of our treatment technologies. When therapy is ineffective, it adds to the client’s burden by “proving” the problem’s characterological origin. Diagnoses are tendered as retaliatory explanations for treatments gone awry--“purple hearts” of failed therapy. Based on a five year experiential study of impossibility, this workshop presents a pragmatic application of a single invaluable lesson taught to us by our clients: *success can occur with impossibility when therapy honors the client’s theory of change*. Within the client is a theory of change waiting for discovery, a framework for intervention to be unfolded and intentionally accommodated for a successful outcome. The participant will experience, via videotape presentation, the inspiration of observing causalities of treatment triumph over adversity.

**Learning objectives include:**

- Participants will learn four pathways to impossibility and how to avoid them.
- Participants will learn the empirical argument for honoring the client’s theory of change.
- Participants will learn a pragmatic method of assessing the client’s theory of change and accommodating therapy to that theory as a pathway out of impossibility.



Barry L. Duncan, Psy.D., is a therapist, trainer, and researcher with over 17,000 hours of clinical experience. He is co Director of the Institute for the Study of Therapeutic Change (ISTC) and practices in Boca Raton, Florida. Dr. Duncan has received numerous awards for his contributions to the mental health field, including the Wright State University School of Professional Psychology’s first annual “Outstanding Alumnus Award,” the Menninger Foundation’s 15th Annual Award for Scientific Writing for the book *The Heart and Soul of Change*, and the Psychotherapy Networker “20th Anniversary All Time Top Ten Award” for the article “Exposing the Mythmakers,” recognizing it as one of the most influential features in the magazine’s history. Barry has over one hundred publications, including thirteen books. His latest books: *The Heroic Client* (2nd edition) with Scott Miller and Jacqueline Sparks (Jossey Bass, 2004) offers both a critique of mental health practice and suggests an alternative based in outcome management; *Heroic Clients, Heroic Agencies: Partners for Change*, with Jacqueline Sparks (ISTC Press, 2002), details the “how-tos” of involving clients as valued partners and provides down-to-earth suggestions for transforming mental health services into client directed practices; and finally the American Psychological Association’s (APA) best selling, *The Heart & Soul of Change*, with Scott Miller and Mark Hubble (APA Press, 1999), provides a thorough treatment of “what works” in therapy from the most noted scholars in psychology. After seven years of research, Barry co-developed with Scott Miller a scientifically tested outcome management system designed to provide clients, front line mental health professionals, administrators, and payers with feedback about the client’s response to mental health services, thus enabling more effective care at a substantial cost reduction.

Because of his self help books, he has appeared on “Oprah,” “The View,” and several other national TV programs and has been featured in *Psychology Today* and *USA Today*. His latest self help book, *What’s Right With You*, challenges the business as usual mentality of “What’s wrong with you” and instead demonstrates how to rally natural resources and resiliencies to overcome life challenges. Barry conducts seminars internationally in client directed, outcome informed therapies in hopes of inciting insurrection against practices that diminish clients and encouraging therapists to establish their own identity.