

Interview 5: My Father Also Hit Me
Interviewer: Theresa B. Moyers, Ph.D.
Client: Fred
Context: Child Protective Services referral
Time: 11 minutes
Focus: Parenting skills to avoid child abuse

			Code
1	I	So Fred, I'm wondering if you can tell me a little about what brings you here today to the parenting center. I have a report from the social worker saying that you have been referred for a parenting skills class, but I don't know much more about it than that.	
2	C	Yeah. I got upset and I blew up at the social worker. She called me and told me that the teacher reported a mark on Mikie, and so I got upset, and it wasn't so much that she called about the mark. It was about the way she was speaking to me that really got me upset.	
3	I	Mm hmm	
4	C	She made me feel as though maybe I wasn't being a good father.	
5	I	Ah	
6	C	'Cause <i>I'm trying to be a better father</i> , and she made me feel as though I was abusive to Mike.	
7	I	Hmm. The interaction you had with her – you ended up with a feeling like she thought you were an abusive father, and particularly she wasn't picking up on the fact that you've made a lot of efforts to be a good Dad.	
8	C	Yeah. Well, I understand that she wouldn't know, because I don't know her, she doesn't know me, but then I felt maybe she was just assuming, you know, from one mark that there was a history of abuse, and I really don't. I mean, my father hit me, <i>and I'm trying my best not to be so physically abusive with – or not so much "abusive," but physical with my son.</i>	
9	I	You feel like you've already been making efforts to change the way you're disciplining your child.	
10	C	<i>Yes, I have. That's one of the most important things to me as a father, because I don't assume that the way I was raised was right. I know there were some things about it that were good, but for the most part I feel that there are things that I could improve upon and I've been working hard to improve these things, or maybe, in my opinion, I've been working hard.</i>	
11	I	Can you tell me a little bit more about that? Like how would you like to change the way you are with your child?	
12	C	<i>I'd like to be more patient.</i>	
13	I	I see.	
14	C	<i>Yes, more patient. I don't want to say "understanding," because I do try to see – even though he's a child, I still try to see things from his point of view.</i>	
15	I	Mm hmm	
16	C	which is very difficult, but I don't want him to grow up disrespectful, and I don't want him to grow up and come across as weak to other	

		people.	
17	I	OK	
18	C	Yes.	
19	I	On the one hand, you want to improve the way you are with him, and you don't want to be so physical in your punishment, but on the other hand you don't want him to be weak, and you don't want him to be disrespectful.	
20	C	Yes, I feel it's important for him to understand the role of authority	
21	I	Uh huh	
22	C	Especially within the family. Yes, because it is my house. I consider it my house, and as my kid, I don't necessarily want him to be obedient, but I want him to be conscious of the decision-maker.	
23	I	Mm hmm. You would like some respect from your son.	
24	C	Yes, definitely	
25	I	And on the other hand, it doesn't seem like the way things have been going is getting you what you want	
26	C	<i>Yes, sadly I do feel that way. I do feel that way. I feel that as I've tried to show authority, I guess, with the physical, I don't think it's helping, because I think, well, I've been noticing that Mike's becoming gradually, or I don't know gradually, but I've noticed that he's been more afraid of me lately, and when I do raise my voice he becomes withdrawn, and when I become angry with him, he starts to cry a little. So I suppose in trying to make him stronger and not cry, so to speak, I believe maybe I'm kind of getting the outcome I'm trying to avoid.</i>	
27	I	Huh. So even though you're trying to have a child that's respectful and strong, and not weak, what's happening is the exact reverse, that he's becoming afraid of you and kind of intimidated by you, and you don't like that.	
28	C	<i>Oh, not at all, because that's how I was raised, and I didn't . . . I guess my reaction wasn't to cry, so I assumed Mike that would be the same. I mean, they don't have a manual on parenting.</i>	
29	I	Yeh. Well, isn't that right. Nobody gives you a manual and tells you how to do it right.	
30	C	Yeah.	
31	I	And you came out OK from the parenting you got from your Dad, and you were thinking that it would turn out OK for Mikie, but as you're looking at the way things are going, you're saying, "You know what, I think I need more."	
32	C	<i>Yeah. I definitely need more. I think, well I'm noticing now that Mike and I are two - well, as much as we are alike, we are very different in many ways, and so maybe what worked for me is not going to work for Mike.</i>	
33	I	Yeah. And that maybe he needs different things for discipline that you'd like to know more about.	
34	C	<i>Yeah. Yeah, definitely.</i>	
35	I	Well, what thoughts have you had about different ways that you might discipline your child, and still, you know, still have the kind of respect that you feel like you're gonna need?	
36	C	Well, I think - well, my wife practices this choice thing that I don't really understand too well, so <i>I want to learn a little more about how to give</i>	

		<i>Mike choices, and also I'm thinking maybe like stars on the fridge, some sort of incentive type program.</i>	
37	I	I see. So you've heard about some ways of doing things with Mikie that your wife is doing, and you're thinking, "You know what, I could learn some of those things and maybe just try them out."	
38	C	Yeah. I mean these things are completely new to me. I really don't understand them, <i>so I definitely want to learn them. Definitely.</i>	
39	I	And I wonder what you think about coming to a place like this, where that's kind of our job, is to teach people different ideas or different ways of becoming a parent.	
40	C	Yeah, but - I don't know. I'm not too sure about certain things. I would prefer if I spoke more with like a group of men. If there was something like that. I don't feel a woman can really teach me how to be a Dad, because being a Dad is a male thing, so . .	
41	I	You want to be in a place where people can respect what it's like to be a father, and the kind of contribution a Dad makes that might be different maybe than the contribution a Mom makes.	
42	C	Yes. I mean, no offense, but a man understands a man better than a woman would, so, yeah, especially if maybe they were other Dads in my similar situation, we can talk about things, maybe iron it out together, and understand it a little bit more thoroughly as a group.	
43	I	So one thing that would make it easier to come to a place like this is if you felt that it wasn't all about the way women do things with children.	
44	C	Yes	
45	I	And that there was something more about the way specifically Dads do things with children.	
46	C	Yes. Yes, I think women and men do things very differently, and think it makes a balance, and especially for a son, they need that balance. So I want Mike to have the male perspective.	
47	I	Yep. You don't want to lose that in everything that's going on here.	
48	C	Not at all.	
49	I	And that's important to you.	
50	C	Yes	
51	I	And it's also important to you to learn some ways of doing things that won't make your child afraid of you.	
52	C	<i>Yes, well, yeah.</i>	
53	I	Even though you want your son to have the input of a father, you don't want your son to be afraid.	
54	C	<i>Yes, I don't want to teach him how to do that to his son, so maybe I can stop it here? Yeah. I think it's important to - that any improvements, if I want improvements, the improvements have to start with me, and so I want to try not to strike Mike any more. I know it's going to be tough, cause it's in a moment of passion and everything, but I feel that I can do it. I can do it, with the help.</i>	
55	I	I think you can do it too, and I think that you really have taken a step towards becoming a better parent, and you've just made up your mind that this is something you're going to do. I can see it, right.	
56	C	Yeah	
57	I	And I do think we have some classes here that might be helpful for you,	

		and that would also, I think, take care of this thing with the social worker, right, and kind of take care of that and get that off your back. And we do have classes where there are fathers. Now, the classes are run by both a man and a woman, so it's not just a woman and it's not just a man, it's both of them together running the classes. And there are both men and women in there, because both men and women sometimes need to learn or want to learn different ways of, you know, disciplining their children. So it's not just one or the other, and so I wonder how that would feel to you.	
58	C	I, well, I feel , well, <i>I obviously have to do it</i> , but I feel like the women being there would kind of like – I really wouldn't want to say anything cause I don't like arguing with women, so <i>I'll give it a shot</i> , but I'm really not too enthusiastic about the women being there.	
59	I	Um hmm. That's a little bit not what you wanted.	
60	C	Yeah. It's actually a lot not what I wanted. (Laughs)	
61	I	But you might be willing to give it a try.	
62	C	<i>Yeah. Oh yeah. I'm willing to give it a try</i>	
63	I	OK	
64	C	Yeah	
65	I	And is there anything else – any other concerns you have about coming here, what might happen, what might be said to you, anything like that.	
66	C	I just, I just feel like, I feel like maybe – see well I'm worried, I'm obviously worried about my authority, so I'm a little bit worried that, that perhaps by coming here, that some people would think that maybe I've, maybe I just don't have it any more, that I've lost it, so . .	
67	I	People here, or people in your family?	
68	C	People in general, people around me. That's what I mean by "here."	
69	I	So for you to come here really means that you're going to have to pay attention to the reaction people have about your authority and whether you're still going to get the respect that you feel you deserve.	
70	C	Yeah, I feel like it may kind of diminish my image a little	
71	I	Uh huh	
72	C	Yeah, so I kind of keep it a secret. I'm really not telling anybody. I'm not broadcasting that, "Hey, I'm taking these, uh, sessions, but it's not . ."	
73	I	And of course that's your choice, whether you would tell people about coming here. That really is entirely up to you, but I'm struck by how you really are willing to pay a big price in order to do something that's right for your boy.	
74	C	Parenting's not easy. (Laughs)	
75	I	No, that's right.	