

CASE MATERIAL

Jose

IDEN: 17 yo; Mexican-American; lives with mother, stepfather, and two younger siblings; Mother is employed as a caregiver for a disabled woman; father is employed in groundskeeping.

REFERRAL AND HISTORY OF PRESENTING PROBLEM:

Jose's high school counselor contacted his parent, recommending mental health services. Jose is struggling in school with poor attendance and poor academic performance. He has been held back one grade. He recently told a peer he was thinking of killing himself. This information was shared with a guidance counselor.

Initial evaluation indicates that Jose struggles with mood dysregulation and substantial sleep disturbance. He reports regular alcohol abuse. He reports continued distress concerning the death of his biological father, reporting that he has been unable to talk to anyone about this. His stepfather is reportedly not supportive of mental health services and tells Jose to "get over it and move on." Jose says he "can't stand living anymore."

Jose meets diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder and Alcohol Dependence Disorder. Additional information is needed to rule out Bipolar Disorder.

FAMILY:

Mother: Strong family orientation; History of steady employment; History of depression;
Stepfather: Possible alcohol abuse or dependence
Siblings: No reported mental health problems

PRESENTATION: Appears his stated age; polite; somewhat reserved initially; severely depressed affect; showed high level of agitation at times; thought processes logical, sequential and coherent; no delusions/hallucinations; no known history of alcohol or substance abuse.

Sara

IDEN: 15yo girl, Caucasian, lives with biological parents, only child currently in home; parents with professional degrees and with “upper middle class” family income

REFERRAL AND HISTORY OF PRESENTING PROBLEM:

Suicide attempt: Aspirin overdose; Sara told her parents of overdose immediately and was taken for emergency services. Sara expressed much regret and guilt at this time. This occurred on the anniversary of her older sister's suicide.

Depressive disorder: multiple symptoms, moderate to severe
"Lifelong" history of social anxiety and depressed mood

FAMILY:

Father: Medical disability resulted in early retirement

Mother: "Homemaker" – History of chronic depression

Oldest brother: Severely mentally handicapped and institutionalized;

Oldest sister: Married, living with husband; Next Oldest sister: suicide

Cohesive Family that is socially isolated; Impression of much warmth and separation anxiety among family members (Sara and her parents);

PRESENTATION: Appears stated age, well-groomed, much attention to appearance; strong student; socially appropriate; thought processes logical, sequential and coherent; notably depressed affect; no delusions/hallucinations; no known history of alcohol or substance abuse.

Alicia

IDEN: 14 yo girl, African American, lives just northwest of Cleveland with mother and sister (parents separated, older brother away at college); She attends a small, private Catholic school. Her mother is employed; the family socioeconomic status may be described as lower-middle. The family places a strong value on “good citizenship” and education.

REFERRAL AND HISTORY PRESENTING PROBLEM:

“Depression evaluation”

Hx presenting problem: multiple, severe depressive symptoms (gradual onset beginning last year); weeping, depressed mood/affect, suicidal thoughts, self-hatred, excessive fatigue, anhedonia, exaggerated guilt, decreased concentration (no appetite disturbance);

Thought of “taking whole bunch of pills so won't wake up;”

Quiet, patient describes herself as “introverted”, interpersonally sensitive;

Reports difficulties with separation/transitions (school);

Others describe Alicia as “quiet, shy, sweet;”

Alicia reports positive family relationships and puts extensive effort into schoolwork. She has two good friends. She is not sexually active.

No previous mental health services

FAMILY:

Strong family history of affective disorders, alcohol/substance dependence, suicide;

Mother treated for depression, suicide attempt (pill overdose as teenager);

Mother’s siblings (11 total): 1 suicide, 2 diagnosed with bipolar disorder, 2 diagnosed with depressive disorder, 1 drug dependent;

Mother’s aunt: Recent suicide

Maternal grandfather: alcohol dependence, early death (cirrhosis of liver)

Paternal grandfather: drug user/dealer who died in homicide

Paternal grandmother: recent death/cancer

Alicia’s cousins: 1 older female with suicide attempt (pills and alcohol); 1 male cousin recently died by suicide

PRESENTATION: Trim, well-groomed; polite and cautiously engaged;

Affect depressed, teary; Stated she feels feels unattractive, wants braces; Brightened when speaking of two close friends

Note: All names have been changed to protect the individuals.