**Case Presentation 2**

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Client is a 21-year-old Caucasian female who identifies as a cis-gender, female who uses she/her pronouns. The client is heterosexual and has been in a committed relationship with her boyfriend for about a year and a half. She is an undergraduate student at the University of Arkansas and currently lives off campus with her two roommates. She is a senior and should be graduating in the spring. This client and I have met 9 times in total through the online clinic, which began the week of September 4th. As we have continued building our therapeutic relationship, she has opened up to me about trauma she has experienced and wants to heal from this experience. In this session, we discuss a homework assignment that I gave her surrounding her sexual assault, writing a letter to the assailant. This open chair technique helped continue her journey of reducing anxiety symptoms and improving her self-esteem and self-worth.

**Presenting Problem**

Client has previously seen a counselor through the online clinic and wanted to continue services after reporting relational issues with a “toxic” friend group and needing assistance with processing how this has impacted her since her freshman year. This client has a history of feeling abandoned by the people she feels closest to, directly impacting her self-esteem and self-worth. Looking at this through an Adlerian lens, it can be noted that the client has not been heard or validated by her inner social circle and has high expectations of herself amongst her education goals. This can leave her with feelings of low self-esteem, self-worth, and causes her anxiety surrounding her education and social life when she does not meet her personal goals or self-actualization. The client is currently struggling with feelings of belonging and understanding her personal motivations behind her behaviors when around different groups of friends and within her romantic relationships. This causes confusion within the client because it feels distorted for her when she describes how she is feeling and what she experiences, but she is told that it is wrong.

**Developmental Neurobiological Aspects**

Looking at a developmental neurobiological perspective, client’s neurological functioning has been impacted by her traumatic history within interpersonal relationships. Her severed friendships and sexual assault in particular attribute to this. In return, this has impacted her memory recall, ability to process her trauma, and attachments to those closest to her. In this session, the client begins discussing how these traumatic experiences with feeling betrayed, abandoned, and unsafe have left her with uncertainty within herself. Counselor and client moved forward with supportive reflections, cognitive reframing, and exploration of emotions to help her with the cognitive distortions she faces.

**Psychosocial History**

Client reported that she grew up in a family of five, including a mother, father, and her two older sisters. She reports that her parents “didn’t mean to” compare her and her siblings to one another, but that made an impact on her. She felt the pressure from those conversations to be the “academic” one because her older sister is “disorganized and could have applied herself” and her middle sister is a “direct individual” who “points things out a lot to the family.” This created a more competitive environment for the siblings growing up, but she reports feeling like she and her sisters are not as competitive as they have gotten older. She also has a “brilliant” boyfriend whom she compares herself often academically. This can cause some doubts in her own intellectual capabilities since he “doesn’t struggle” as much as she does with certain subjects. She reports feeling “happy” within this relationship.

Client also reports having difficulty with her social life since she began college. Her freshman year was extremely challenging for her after being surrounded by a “toxic” friend group. She made friends with another student who introduced her to a guy within this “toxic” friend group who sexually assaulted her. When she tried to disclose this for support, the friend she made stated that “he didn’t mean it like that.” She reports feeling like this sexual assault was “a mistake.” Those two then dated, which hurt her deeply because she thought she may have still liked him. She reports “feeling confused” about the sexual assault because she reports feeling “conservative” within her romantic and sexual relationships, so she wanted to try dating him because she “doesn’t just sleep around.”

This caused other issues within the group of friends they all shared. They later made fun of the client behind her back and abandoned her friendship. This caused cognitive distortions such as feelings of isolation or not belonging and polarization within her behaviors (i.e., feeling like she is “always loud and annoying” because the friend group said so). Client reports having a healthier group of friends now and enjoying their company, however she “feeling regretful” of the time she spent in her earlier years with “the wrong people.”

Client has experienced a lot of betrayal and abandonment within her closest interpersonal relationships during her college years. Client reports “wanting closure” from the “toxic friend group” and her sexual assault because she never received that prior to counseling. She has seen a counselor before for a few months through the online clinic before seeing me, but “it never got that far” because she “sees things differently now.”

**Mental Status, Assessment, and Diagnostic Impressions**

Client is oriented to the time, place, and location that she is in. Client participates in session and her affect is congruent within the discussions and content within session. Client does not have any abnormal perceptualities to note of.

Client has not had an official assessment; however, she possesses the symptoms to meet the criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder DSM-5 300.02. The symptoms include excessive worry and anxiety occurring most days for at least six months, having difficulty controlling her worry, difficulty concentrating, feeling restless, and the symptoms cause distress in her every day activities including her academics and social life. These symptoms cannot be explained or attributed to medication or drug use or another mental health disorder. These symptoms have specifically made it difficult to concentrate on her studies, create healthy friendships based on trust. We created a goal to help her with coping skills to assist her with alleviating these symptoms, which she has reported being helpful within the last week of treatment.

**Intervention Plan/Goals**

1. Help client process trauma to help with quality of life and daily functioning.
2. Develop coping skills to alleviate symptomology.
3. Assist client with challenging self-perception including her negative self-beliefs and engaging in self-compassion.

**Prognosis**

The client is displaying cues that she is engaging in the action stage of change. Client has engaged in session with a collaborative approach and reports utilizing the given homework to improve symptomology. In this session, she brings in the homework I gave her to write a letter to her assailant. She was invited to read it out loud to me and to discuss how she felt writing the letter and reading it out loud to me. She reported feeling “better” after reading the letter to me in this session because she was able to identify how she was feeling, remembered more details about the assault, and was able to discuss action steps with the counselor as needed. /Client has attended nine sessions and continues to comply with the process of counseling. With such high motivation, client may see high levels of attainment within her therapeutic goals.

**Skills and Challenge Areas of the Session**

In this clip I had a couple of moments that I felt were powerful for the client. One example of this was asking her about how she felt about reading the letter to me beforehand to identify where she was emotionally speaking. I also wanted to preface her reading the letter by stating that she can take breaks when needed and to take her time with it. This was also important to note because she went through the last letter to her ex-best friend last week very quickly. I wanted to ensure that she felt comfortable to slow down and take the time she needs to read this out loud. I also said to not apologize for the amount of graphic information she discussed in the letter because it was about her healing process, not about how I felt about the information.

When she took a break, I offered for her to take a breath before resuming the letter because she was seemingly flustered. Giving some space for silence after she read to then ask, “what was that like reading that to me?” was a way for her to reflect on how she was feeling in that moment. I also gave her psychoeducation surrounding reporting it, which was powerful for her to learn because she has not discussed this with anyone besides friends who have essentially blown her off. Lastly, I also like the way that I ask about what she is hoping to gain from telling her mom about the rape and seeing her pause and consider her motivations was a powerful part of this session because she was able to see the support she wants from her mom.

To speak upon my growth edges, I am unsure about how my enthusiasm comes off in the beginning of this session. I also noticed that when she jumps into speaking about how her parents sensing that something was “off” about her, specifically her mother, that I could have slowed her down more to process this. However, my intention was to help facilitate her processing this information after reading the letter because it seemed to activate more thoughts and memories regarding her mother noticing changes in her during this time. I also asked her if it would be a positive thing to talk to her parents about the assault and looking back, I wish I empathized more with her throughout this conversation instead of asking for more information from her.

As I look through an Adlerian lens, I intend to help the client learn more about her overall themes of socialness within her friend group and familial relationships to help her understand her own unique point of view on life. Walking her through her intentions behind her behaviors, specifically her social behaviors, can help uncover possible distortions that lead to unhelpful or destructive behaviors. Within the purposes beyond her behaviors, we are revealing information about what the goals and intentions are. This includes if they are significantly helping her purpose, which can lead to clarity. I am thankful to have worked with this client and am hopeful that the work we have done together can help her healing journey continue in a healthy and productive way.