

MFT610 CBT FOO Paper

Presenting Concern

My niece in a family of five – parents, brother age 16, sister age 14, has suddenly fallen back in her school work. Her teacher reports that she is distracted in school. At home she is withdrawn and has temper tantrums. When spoken to she goes to her room and slams the door. She does not want to socialize with the family.

Assessment

Ana was concerned about Samantha's behavior in school and home. She had not always displayed this type of behavior and was always cooperative in school and at home, and had good grades. Her mother explained that her siblings did exceptionally well in school and displayed no concerns in the home. Samantha explained that she wanted to keep up with the good performance in school like her brother and sister but she could not because it was hard work. This is what made her sad. Samantha also expressed concern that no-one seemed to be giving her enough attention at home before. Now everyone was noticing her. She thought that her brother and sister did not care about her doing well in school. They never expressed caring when she did well on tests. Samantha seemed to be putting more emphasis in the evaluation of her siblings and their dismissive attitude when at home than her parents. The way in which they behaved acted as reinforcers to increase her behavior. Her mother explained that Samantha was more withdrawn when everyone was at home, and when I spoke to Samantha about this she responded that no-one wanted to talk to her anyway. It was obvious that her siblings' presence and how she thought of herself encouraged her depression. There was little sympathy or support from them. The schemas which Samantha had centered around how she thought of herself in terms of her educational ability. The assumptions which she arrived at in relation to her siblings valuation of her and the way they related to her, all resulted in the futility of her exerting herself in her school work. All of these schemas contributed to cognitive distortions for Samantha and the behaviors she exhibited as a result of them.

Goal

The primary goal of therapy was to improve the behavior which Samantha was displaying – tantrums, banging of doors, being withdrawn. This was proving to be most distressing for Samantha and her family.

Intervention

Samantha was asked questions to determine why she thought that her siblings did not care about her, why she thinks that they are not concerned that she does well in school, and whether either of them had ever expressed negative thoughts to her about herself or her work. She could not respond positively to these questions and simply said that they were not around to talk to. Samantha could be educated to understand that they may not be showering her with attention could have more to do with the fact that they are busy in school and after school activities, and not because they do not want to associate with her.

Samantha's parents would be asked to involve her siblings more in specific social events with their younger sister. Activities could be structured in which Samantha will shine above others to show her positive self. Discussion with Samantha could reveal which things she has always been good at in the home and put her in charge of them. Samantha's parents would be expected to request involvement of the older siblings in these activities who were already aware of Samantha's behavior and were concerned about her. Samantha's parents would be encouraged to indulge in a great deal of positive reinforcement with Samantha when tasks were completed or even certain suggestions made by her. She was to be educated on how important she was to the family, and that she does not have to be doing the same as her brother and sister. They would be asked to encourage more family group conversations in which all members are given recognition and commendation – with emphasis of course on Samantha – to show how much she is valued by her whole family, and siblings in particular.