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Study Case Three: College Success

Many of the events in which we are involved on a daily basis are somewhat predictable. However, many of them create internal conflicts because they disconfirm previous expectations. To overcome the internal conflict, the attribution process is set in motion, in which we try to find the answer to the question of why.

Attribution is the act of explaining why something happens or why a person acts in a particular way; we attribute our actions and those of others to causes. This definition leads us to see this action of attribution as a fundamental concept to understand that it is not the behavior that generates the interpersonal conflict but the different interpretations of the same behavior by the actor and observer, which in this example would be Jim and his father.

I consider that in this specific situation, Jim's father attributes his low grades in college to his lack of responsibility and commitment (that means the dimension of responsibility within personal control). Whereas Jim attributes his father's attributions to his own experience in college (that means internal-external locus dimension), saying that he reacts this way because, in his day, it was much easier to get better grades, whereas now it is more difficult, even when he is trying with all of himself to get A's.

I think when we are young, we tend to get defensive of our parents very often, but at the same time, just through the text, I thought what Jim said was very convincing. From my perspective, Jim is being honest about trying his best to get better grades, but he's having much trouble getting there. But maybe my first impression could be wrong, so to

ensure that, I would ask him a few questions that would help me confirm if he has tried everything. One of the questions would be if he has tried to make use of the facilities that his university gives, such as the writing center, which is a group of people who advise students to do better essays; I would also ask him if he has ever tried to ask for any extensions from his professors in order to have more time to do his homework better or to study more; I would ask him how often he goes out with his friends and how much energy he gives to those outings; finally, I would also ask him if you are being a good manager of his time and how he organizes himself to do your homework and study.

Jim's parents' perfect prototype of college life is that everyone studies all the time and getting good grades is easy, whereas Jim has a prototype of college life as a great experience in which there is a balance between good grades and social life. The stereotype closely resembles the prototype; Jim's parents have the expectation that their son will not go on any outings with his friends because he prefers to study in his room around the clock in order to get good grades; on the other hand, Jim considers this stereotype to be totally contrary to reality. As for the scripts, Jim's parents expect their son to act according to the previous stereotype they generated, bringing home the best grades and knowing that his only priority is to study, so he should be turning down invitations to go out with his friends.

Looking at this bigger picture I would tell Jim that even though it seems like his parents are against him and don't want to help him, they really care about his future and want the best for him, so he needs to honor them. I would advise him to have a conversation with them and show them that the semester he will seek more alternative help so that he can improve in his grades. In this conversation Jim will have to find a way

to get his parents to trust him, so making an organizational plan that also includes times where Jim can go out with his friends will make his parents see that he is really taking his classes seriously and that he is trying. To his parents, I would tell them to have more confidence in their son, and that if they are so concerned, they should follow up with him more closely, perhaps asking each week how he is doing and how they can help.