

Practicum Case Study: “Emily” & “Kate” - Elementary School

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Identifying Information

In order to preserve confidentiality, the students in this case study will be referred to as “Emily” and “Kate.” Emily is a nine year old female student who is in third grade at Fort Lee School #3 which is a K-4 elementary school in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Emily identifies as Asian American from Korean descent and she was born in the United States of America and lives in Fort Lee, New Jersey. In terms of religion, she is Christian and Emily is able-bodied and does not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan on file. Emily is a very smart and sweet student who doesn’t struggle academically. However, Emily came from Fort Lee School #2 last year and while she was at that school, she had many social issues on connecting with other students her age. At the beginning of this school year, Emily would cry in class when it came to social issues, and she would scream at her teacher and fellow classmates. As the school year has gone on, Emily has been doing slightly better and has received an older buddy from fourth grade to hang out with during recess. Overall, this is why Emily was a participant in this friendship group, so she could get help with making new connections and making new friends.

Kate is an eight year old female student who is also in the third grade at Fort Lee School #3. Kate identifies as Turkish, and she was born in Turkey but is also a citizen of the United States of America. Kate lives in Fort Lee, New Jersey and her religion is Islam. She is able-bodied and does not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan on file. Kate is bilingual and speaks both Turkish and English so with that she doesn’t qualify for ESL. Kate is a very smart and polite student who just moved here from Turkey a few years ago so ever since she has gotten to Fort Lee School #3, she has struggled to make new friends. This is why Kate is another participant of the friendship group, so she can build new friendship connections just like Emily.

Family Background/Significant Events

Emily has two older siblings in the Fort Lee school system. She has one older sister who is currently in seventh grade and is attending Lewis F. Cole Middle School in Fort Lee and her second older sister is in tenth grade and is at Fort Lee High School. Emily lives with her mother and father and Emily's mother is a stay at home mother while her dad is in the construction business. Emily says that her home life is great and that her parents are very loving.

Kate has one older brother who is in eighth grade at Lewis F. Cole Middle School in Fort Lee. Kate says she looks up to her brother so much and that they are always doing things together. Kate has also mentioned to the school counselor in training that her brother doesn't speak English very well and has had trouble making friends in school. This indicated to the school counselor in training as to maybe why Kate has also struggled to make friends at school. Kate lives with her mother and father with her mother working as a nurse and her dad working as an accountant. Kate has emphasized to the school counselor in training that her home life is incredible and everyone in her family gets along very well.

Presenting Issues/Case Conceptualization

As stated earlier (above), both Emily and Kate have been struggling to make friends ever since they have both gotten to Fort Lee School #3. Emily has had many social issues in the past and that has been affecting her path to making friends. Kate is brand new to not only Fort Lee School #3 but the United States of America since she moved away from Turkey a few years ago. The site supervisor put together a friendship group of five third grade girls who have been struggling with making friends at school this year. The reason this case study is only focusing on two of the girls, Emily and Kate is because they were the only ones to get the permission slip signed by their parents in order to be filmed for the purpose of this case study done by the school

counselor in training. The site supervisor thought that running a friendship group would be a different and great experience/practice for when the school counselor in training has to do these on his own.

Goals/Assessment

The school counselor in training has met with the friendship group three different times. The first time the friendship group met, it was all five third grade girls who didn't know each other because they were all from different classes. Each of these three meetings took place during their lunch time in which the school counselor in training had about 15 minutes to meet with the whole group because the lunch period is short. During the first meeting the school counselor in training introduced himself and had each girl introduce herself to the group as well. Once the school counselor in training went over confidentiality and the group rules, the whole group played a get to know you game by filling out a get to know you worksheet and then the girls shared their answers with most of them finding things in common.

Before the end of the first group, the school counselor in training explained the two SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals to the group. The first SMART goal is to learn how to use "I messages." In school every student has been taught how to use "I messages" which are statements you say or write down starting with using the word "I." All of these girls have struggled to make friends and most of the time they struggled to express how they feel, and it makes other people in their grade not wanting to play with them or be friends with them. This SMART goal was taught and practiced with all five girls during the second meeting. Each girl received an "I message" sheet that has the format of how to properly say/use an I message when you need to use one. You state one by saying "I feel..., when you..., because..., I want/need..." The friendship group went around in a circle and practiced with

different scenarios on how to use “I messages.” Hopefully each girl from the friendship group can take this new skill they have learned more and apply it to when something happens.

The second SMART goal is to learn how to be a good friend and what that means. This is a broader goal that was practiced with just Emily and Kate during the third meeting of the friendship group. Both Emily and Kate received a “My Friendship Skills, Self-Assessment” sheet which had ten different statements on it, and they had to rate each statement from 0 (not true), 1 (a little true), 2 (almost always true), and 3 (true). For example, one of the statements was “If someone is being annoying, I know how to handle it in a friendly, kind, and understanding way.” The school counselor in training asked both Emily and Kate what can we use to say to someone who has been annoying us in a friendly way? This was the school counselor in training referring back to “I messages” and the school counselor in training had both Emily and Kate practice this again but by adding friendship skills. The reason the school counselor in training practiced friendship skills with both Emily and Kate is because they have been struggling to make new friends in Fort Lee School #3, so the school counselor in training thought it would be a great idea to go over with both Emily and Kate what makes a good friend so they can take this and use it after the friendship group has ended.

Interventions

Like stated earlier (above), when the two SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals were being talked about, one intervention and technique that was used and discussed with both Emily and Kate was the use of scenario practice. The school counselor in training took the two SMART goals of learning “I messages” and learning how to be a good friend by having both Emily and Kate read different statements on the “My Friendship Skills, Self-Assessment” worksheet and try to figure out how to solve them. This is a great way

for both of them to conceptualize different scenarios that could happen when they are trying to be a good friend and trying to make new friends at Fort Lee School #3.

Dynamics of Counseling Session(s)

Before just meeting with Emily and Kate for the third friendship group, the school counselor in training met with all five girls originally involved in the friendship group meetings that took place during their lunch period. Like stated earlier (above), the first meeting was to establish group rules/expectations and for everyone to get to know each other a bit more since everyone was from a different class. The first meeting was very short but the school counselor in training felt that it went very well as everyone got along and was able to relate to many things that they have in common and hopefully they all become friends after these group sessions have concluded.

The second meeting was about going over how to use “I messages” and that went well too as all five of the girls in the friendship group understood how to use them and how it will help them get along with other students in their class and during recess as well to try and make new friends. The third session which is the one that this case study is focusing on was just with Emily and Kate since they were the only ones to have their parents sign the permission slip to be filmed. It was a little awkward because it seemed like Emily and Kate felt out of place due to the fact that they would question where the other group members were. On top of that, one of the two girls in the third friendship group, Emily would keep looking back at the site supervisor and ask her questions instead of the school counselor in training since the site supervisor sat at the table and almost was a “silent member” of the group. It felt slightly strange, and it was hard to properly film because of that, but overall, all three friendship group sessions went well and were successful. Both Emily and Kate were excited to continue these meetings in the future.

Self-Evaluation of Clinical Work

The school counselor in training built a positive and strong counseling relationship with both Emily and Kate after the third friendship group session. Emily and Kate both wanted high fives after the session was over, they seemed very happy afterwards. This let the school counselor in training know that a good and trusting relationship was built between the students and the school counselor in training. One thing that would be done differently next time is to not have the site supervisor be in the group since it did hinder some conversations during the third friendship group.

Cultural and Diversity Issues/Cultural Reflection

There is no presenting cultural and diversity issues for Emily and Kate that relate to their presenting issues which is learning how to make new friends and be a good friend. This is non applicable to both Emily and Kate's current situation that the counselor in training has just met with them about.

Questions

Some questions that were asked during these three friendship group sessions and mainly in the third friendship group with Emily and Kate was "how can we be a good friend?" The second question is "what can we do if someone is bothering us?" The final question was "what are ways we can find things we have in common with others in order to start making relationships with other people? All three of these questions were asked throughout each group session and were answered in slightly different ways. These relate to the SMART goals that were established during the first friendship group session and each member of the friendship group, especially Emily and Kate can take what they learned and apply it to help them make new connections and make new friends at Fort Lee School #3.