

Internship 1 – Case Study: “Jen” - High School

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Identifying Information

In order to preserve confidentiality, the student in this case study will be referred to as “Jen.” Jen is an 18 year old female student who is in twelfth grade at Mahwah High School which is in Mahwah, New Jersey. Jen identifies as White and she was born in the United States of America and lives in Mahwah, New Jersey. In terms of religion, she is Christian and Jen is also able-bodied. She does not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 505 Plan on file. Jen is a very smart and polite student who doesn’t struggle academically. Jen is currently in the middle of waiting to hear back from many of the colleges that she has applied to. She has stated that she doesn’t know exactly where she wants to go to college yet but is anxiously waiting for responses back from the colleges that she has applied to. Jen is always willing to talk to a school counselor when she feels that she needs it due to certain factors like being stressed or feeling anxious which is what she is feeling at the moment of this case study because of college admissions.

Family Background/Significant Events

Jen has one older brother and one younger sister. Her older brother graduated from Mahwah High School two years ago and is now at Indiana University studying business. Her younger sister is in eighth grade in the Mahwah school district at Ramapo Ridge Middle School which is up the street from Mahwah High School. Jen says that she is very close with everyone in her family, especially her mother and father.

Presenting Issues/Case Conceptualization

As stated earlier, Jen has been feeling stressed and anxious as she patiently awaits to hear back from many of the colleges that she has applied to over the past year. The site supervisor

thought that Jen would be a great candidate to be the first high school student the school counselor in training gets to meet and have counseling sessions with.

Goals/Assessment

When the school counselor in training met with Jen for their first session, which was what got recorded, she mentioned that she doesn't know what school she wants to go to yet and it is starting to slightly make her anxious and stressed out. When coming up with two SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals for Jen, the counselor in training related the SMART goals for her to her college admissions/college decision. Jen is a very intelligent student who possesses many organization and time management skills which contributes to her success, however for the first time she is experiencing so much going on at once that it is affecting her and causing her to become more anxious and stressed.

With that being said the first SMART goal that was determined for Jen will hopefully help her reduce her anxiety and help her cope with the stress that the college process has given her. The first SMART goal is to learn a new coping skill that will help her take her mind off everything that she is waiting for. Learning a new coping skill like using mindfulness will help Jen stay calm and hopefully help her reduce her anxiety and stress that waiting for college acceptances has given her. Jen mentioned that on top of the stress that waiting for college acceptance letters have given her, she is now working three days a week in a law office because she stated to the school counselor in training that she wants to study criminal law and become a lawyer. With so much going on in her life right now and being so busy, Jen said she needs to find something to take her mind off everything that she has been experiencing in the past few months. Jen said that she doesn't have a specific mindfulness activity in mind so that led the school counselor in training to think of something that Mahwah High School offers which is called

Mindful Mahwah. Mindful Mahwah is an incredible resource that is free to all students, staff, and family members that provides so many different mindfulness activities like music, sleep, breathing, fitness, books, meditation, podcasts, and many more. The school counselor in training showed Jen this website which she stated she has never seen before and encouraged her to look around the website and find something that she likes. The school counselor in training told her that once she finds something try it out for a few days and see if it helps. The next time we meet, we will discuss what you found and how it has hopefully helped you.

The second SMART goal is for her to narrow down her college choices. When meeting with Jen, the school counselor in training checked her Naviance account to see where she applied and where she has gotten in so far. Jen has applied to over 15 colleges and has gotten into only three at the time of the first session. She is still waiting on many more to come in, so the school counselor in training has told her to do more research on the ones she has been thinking about the most and try her best to come up with a rank for each one. During the next session, the school counselor in training and Jen will go over the schools she ranked which will hopefully help her narrow down her college decision.

Interventions

One intervention and technique that will be discussed with Jen is about her trying to find new coping skills and using the Mindful Mahwah website to help her narrow down what will help her reduce the anxiety and stress she has been experiencing which is being caused by waiting for her college acceptances to come back. The first session the school counselor in training had with Jen was a “get to know you” session so not much detail was discussed because the school counselor in training wants to create a trusting relationship with Jen so in future sessions, she will open up and talk to the counselor in training about more serious topics. In the

next session, the school counselor in training tends to go over some mindfulness activities she has found to be useful and to encourage her to keep up with what she is doing.

Dynamics of Counseling Session

The school counselor in training has only had one session with Jen so far. Like stated above in the interventions section, the first session with Jen was to build trust and rapport. By building trust and rapport with Jen, the future sessions will be more insightful because Jen will feel comfortable talking to the school counselor in training about more serious topics. The individual counseling session occurred during Jen's lunch period which was told to the counselor in training that it was a good time to meet so they don't have to miss any class time. In order to "break the ice" the counselor in training just asked simple/basic questions to Jen in order to get to know her. The counselor in training felt that the session went well and that she felt comfortable by the end of the session. Jen mentioned as the school counselor in training was walking her out of the counseling office that she is looking forward to speaking again soon and that she is excited to find some new mindfulness activities to help her reduce her anxiety and stress.

Self-Evaluation of Clinical Work

The school counselor in training felt that he built a good starting point for a good trusting counselor and student relationship to happen after the first session with Jen ended. The school counselor in training now hopes that Jen feels comfortable knowing that she can come into the school counseling office and feel free to say whatever she likes to the school counselor in training as the counseling office is a safe space for everyone. Since the school counselor in training and Jen have only met once, the first session went well and the school counselor in training felt that what was set out to be done was accomplished. If there was anything to be done

differently, it would have been more practice beforehand as this was the first student the school counselor in training was allowed to meet with two months into internship 1.

Cultural and Diversity Issues/Cultural Reflection

There is no presenting cultural and diversity issues for Jen that relate to her presenting anxiety and stress which is caused by waiting for her college application decisions to come through. This is not applicable to Jen's current situation that the counselor in training has yet met with her about.

Questions

In the future, the school counselor in training will ask more specific questions to Jen as their sessions during her lunch time continue every two weeks. A question that the school counselor in training will ask is "how have your new coping skills/mindfulness activities helped you reduce your anxiety and stress from the college application answers?" This will be one of the first questions the school counselor in training asks Jen which will be used as a follow up/check in from last session to hopefully see Jen has been finding something that has helped her reduce her anxiety and stress. Another question that the school counselor in training will ask will be, "when you feel anxious or stressed, do you express it to others or keep it to yourself?" This is a question that the school counselor in training feels would take the sessions to the next "step" in the sense that this opens up many more topics of conversation, depending on how Jen answers the question. The school counselor in training will only ask this question if he feels that Jen feels comfortable and safe enough to have a conversation about that. One more question that the school counselor in training will ask Jen is related to the previous question stated, "who do you feel comfortable talking to?" The school counselor in training would like to know this because it will help the school counselor in training understand who Jen trusts the most when she needs to

talk to someone about something private and/or opening up about her feelings to someone. The school counselor in training can then help Jen learn ways to open up to more people in case she can't talk to anyone else in the moment that she needs to open up to someone. The school counselor in training will emphasize that it is so important to ask for help when needed and to always talk to someone, and to not keep everything in.

Conclusion/Reflection

Overall, starting this process is going to be a great experience not only for the school counselor in training but also Jen who is hopefully going to greatly benefit from it as well. This is going to help the school counselor in training a lot because this is practice with high school students that the school counselor in training hasn't experienced yet up until now. There has only been one individual counseling session with Jen so far, but she has stated that she is looking forward to talking again and using new coping and mindfulness skills to help her reduce her anxiety and stress caused by waiting for her college admissions answers to come in.