**Monica Pena**

Case 3: Hoarding Disorder

Jenny, it is nice to meet you. I am Monica Pena, and thank you for sharing your family history with me. I see that your childhood experiences have followed into your adulthood. You stated that your dad is a photographer and your mom is an assistant bank manager. You and your dad spent a lot of time together because he worked from home. While in your school-age years you were sociable and made friends easily. However, by the second grade, you began to fall behind in your studies.  As I understand, you were tested for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the third grade. You also stated by the eighth grade, you had a hard time with anxiety and making decisions. Your cousin Andrew passed at the age of 14 may look further into later in our session. Fast forward, college, marriage, and separation from your husband. I feel that I need to ask you a series of questions to understand better how I can help. Are you willing to work with me?

**Question 1:**  Do you think your father emotionally abused you?

**Rationale:** By gathering a clear picture of Jenny’s impression of her dad will shed some light on Jenny's thoughts. As a little girl, Jenny’s dad would take away her toys to give to other girls that appreciated school. Jenny developed the habit of hiding her most precious toys from her father (Gorenstein & Comer, 2015). Jenny also started to hoard toilet paper and paper towel holders.

**Jenny answered:** As a child, I did not think too much of it. But as I got older, I remembered how hurt I was that my dad took my toys and gave them to other girls. That was not right, don’t you think so, Miss Pena?

**Pena:** I understand how that action from your dad would hurt your feelings. As a little girl, taking something that is yours and giving it to someone else would make anyone feel sad or angry. Let’s talk about emotional attachments.

**Question 2:**What are your emotional attachments?

**Rationale:**Individuals form an emotional attachment to things, people, or places. In Jenny’s case, her cousin was killed at the age of 14. Jenny kept his broken bike throughout her life and into her adulthood. People that hoard has a strong emotional connection to their possessions.

**Jenny:** I felt if I throw out the bike, it would be like throwing Andrew out of my life (Gorenstein & Comer, 2015).

**Pena:**I understand how that would seem like you were throwing Andrew out of your life. But that is not what you are doing, Jenny. However, the memories you have of Andrew will always be with you even if you do not have his bike in your possession. Next, this brings me to my next question.

**Question 3:**Have you ever had a mental health assessment?

**Rationale:**Learning if Jenny has undergone a mental health assessment would help her learn which assessment is best for Jenny. What course of action for treating Jenny is of importance.

**Jenny:**No, I have never had one. Frankly, I did not think I had a problem until my husband took the kids and left me.

**Pena:**Well, Jenny, you are here now. We will work together to find the best treatment that works best for your well-being and environment.

**Question 4:**Do you know what Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) is?

**Rationale:**By asking Jenny if she has any knowledge of this disorder, she will understand why she hoards. When I explain what OCPD is, Jenny can start to accept she has a problem.

**Jenny:**No. Can you tell me what this OCPD is now that I want help.

**Pena:**Well, Jenny, OCPD is the presence of personality traits such as inflexibility, control of interpersonal relationships, or domains of a persona’s life (Craighead et al., 2013). Hoarding typically involves thoughts about acquiring and maintaining possessions (Craighead et al., 2013). Also, OCPD has been known to accompany anxiety disorder and depression. Now we will talk about treatment.

**Question 5:**What is Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)?

**Rationale:**CBT is a psychological treatment for OCPD. CBT exposes and response prevention (ERP) and cognitive therapy (CT) (Craighead et al., 2013). Also, CBT produces clinically significant improvement if treatment is completed.

**Jenny:**Miss Pena, what is this kind of therapy?

**Pena:**Jenny CBT is a set of techniques derived from the cognitive-behavioral theoretical model and considered most effective (Craighead et al., 2013). CBT is done individually or in groups. But in your case, it will be individual and is 26 sessions in length within approximately a year (Gorenstein & Comer, 2015).

**Question 6:**Will you be ok working with an organizer?

**Rationale:**Helping Jenny organize her home. She will learn to maintain and keep her home organized in a less stressful living environment.

**Jenny:**Yes, now that I have sought the help I need for my children and husband, I am willing to do what it takes to have my family back.

**Pena:**I am glad that you are willing to work with the organizer and me. Once you receive the therapy and learn why everything will fall into place, you have to put in the work. I am glad you realized you needed help, and I am here to help you through this difficult time.

References

Craighead, W. E., Miklowitz, D. J., & Craighead, L. W. (2013). Psychopathology: History, Diagnosis, and Empirical Foundations 2nd edition. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley &Sons, Inc.

Gorenstein, E. E., & Comer, R. J. (2015). Case studies in abnormal psychology 2nd ed. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.