

Marni

Relevant History for Therapist:

Your client Marni is a 16 year old Caucasian woman who meets criteria for Depressive Disorder NOS, panic disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and meets criterion behaviors for BPD. She is a high school student in 10th grade who is barely passing. Her mother is an alcoholic who is rarely at home. When she is, she is with her boyfriend who Marni claims “sucks”. She has a history of suicidal and non-suicidal self-injurious behaviors, beginning when she was about 13 years old. She reports that she was sexually molested by her uncle (who lived next store to her family and frequently helped her mother, a single parent, with child care) starting when she was 9. She attempted to tell her mother about the abuse when she was 11 years old, but was accused of lying and was told to wash her mouth out with soap and pray for God’s mercy to forgive her for telling this lie. She was first psychiatrically hospitalized when she was 13. Since then, she has had several psychiatric hospitalizations following suicide attempts. Marni’s father was incarcerated when she was 15 years old. He had previously been incarnated for six years, starting when Marni was six years old (until she was 10). Marni has made another recent suicide attempt on Sunday (today is Tuesday) and is currently on Unit 5.

TASK: You have been asked by your Youth Counselor to find out what happened, to understand the relevant factors that led up to her suicide attempt. You decide to conduct a chain analysis on the most recent suicide attempt that has resulted in the current hospitalization.

ACTORS: The key is to answer each question, but to not give more information than is being asked of you.

Vulnerability Factors:

- Marni has been depressed as long as she can remember. She has been feeling more depressed for the past several months which she attributes to a recent break up from her boyfriend Javier two weeks ago.
- Her father, Alvin, was recently incarcerated for possession of heroin (he says he was holding it for a friend who is addicted, that it wasn't his, but this report is highly suspicious). Marni is very attached to her father. She has been unusually sad, teary, and sullen over the past week.

What Happened?

- Marni had been visiting her sister for the weekend. Her sister (Alice), who lives about 60 miles away from Marni, has been consistently supportive of Marni and invited her over for the weekend to get her mind off of her break up with Javier.
- Marni and Alice had a good night on Friday (went out to dinner at Gumbaax's, the Cajen Café in Douglasville, then out to a movie, Blade Runner). On Saturday, they did errands together (shopping, laundry), had lunch at their favorite Burrito truck, then watched movie classics at her sister's apartment (including, 28 Dresses and The Devil Wears Prada).
- Marni got up Sunday morning with a pit in her stomach (around 10:00AM; "It's hard to describe...I felt this big hollow feeling in my gut, kind of a mix of sadness and dread, like I just wanted to cry")
- She got out of bed and went into the kitchen where her sister was. (Alice was sitting in the kitchen drinking her coffee and reading the local paper). She drank coffee and read the paper (the comics, the Lifestyle Section, and the Obituary section...nothing particularly upsetting). For the next hour or so as she and her sister drank coffee and read the paper, she hadn't noticed the pit in her stomach. She felt instead content and absorbed.

PROMPTING EVENT:

- Around 11:30AM, her sister Alice got up to get dressed so she could go to work. She left the room and moments later, Marni noticed the pit in her stomach returning. She remembers feeling sad that her sister's departure from the table meant that the weekend was essentially over. "I hate the start of the week...everyone else is going to work or school and hooking up with friends, and I've got nothing going on in my life but stupid school, which I HATE because Javier is making out with his new thing" (Sadness was about an 85 on 100 point scale). She got up from the kitchen table to put food back into the refrigerator. Then she spotted a picture of Javier and her together at the beach that was posted with a magnet on the refrigerator.
- Moment that she spotted the picture, she felt intense sadness and yearning for him: "No one is ever going to love me again. I loved how he me. He understood my sarcastic sense of humor and never got mad at me when I called him at 2:00AM to complain about my mom. He was like the rock I never had."

LINKS

- I was cleaning the kitchen, but I couldn't stop thinking about Javier. That pit in my stomach got bigger and bigger. I missed him so much. I started thinking about all the good times we had together, like the first time we hooked up at Bett's party.

- I couldn't shake it. I felt so bad. I still can't believe me dropping me for Bett of all people. I kept thinking about how Javier is my soul mate. It's just wrong that he's with her. I kept thinking about how I was never going to have this again. (Note: All of this is happening pretty quickly, over a 10 minutes.)
- I started thinking again about killing myself and how good it would be to just be dead, gone. Over. That maybe everyone would be better off without me. That I wouldn't have to face Javier or Bett. (Urges to kill self went up to 5; primary emotion sadness and grief).

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR:

- I started thinking about how I'd do it. I could asphyxiate myself in the garage with the exhaust from my sister's car, or I could eat the bottle of extra strength Tylenol that is in our medicine cabinet in the upstairs bathroom at home.
- I was kind of looking around the kitchen to see what I could use. There was a knife not that far away (a big butcher knife in the knife holder). I had this image of taking it and just stabbing it in my gut.
- I walked over to the knife and picked it up in my hand and actually put it up against my stomach where the pit was. I just wanted out. (urge at this point = 5).
- I must have stood there for...it felt like forever, but it was probably for a minute or two. Just thinking about whether to do it or not. I kept seeing images of Javier flash through my mind. I could hear this voice in my head talking. Voice was saying, "You always chicken out! Do it! Go ahead and do it! You'll be better off dead. Just do it."
- But then I got scared. I hate blood and pain. I chickened out. I think what really happened is that I was standing there frozen, like I couldn't move.
- Instead of stabbing myself, I just cut my arm because that has always helped in the past. (Description of cut: cut her left forearm with the knife seven times, in seven parallel lines across the forearm. She had three cuts initially, superficial. Then she made four more cuts about a minute later, each were slightly more deep than the first three. All bled enough that there was a spattering of blood on the floor, but no required medical attention.
- Her SUDS reduced from a 95 to a 80. She's still feeling upset. She reaches for the knife again, holds it to her gut, thinking, "Just do it! Put this dog out of it's misery!"
- Literally, at that moment, my sister came in and asked me what the hell I was doing. She saw the blood and started yelling at me. Something like, "Put the knife down Marni! Put it down. What the hell are you doing?"
- I felt like an idiot. So I did. I put it down.
- Then she called 911 and said I was suicidal and needed to go to the hospital.

CONSEQUENCES:

- I hate to admit it but the moment I heard, "She's suicidal; she needs to be hospitalized", I could just feel the weight lift from my shoulders, like a sense of comfort and peace. It probably doesn't make sense but that's how I felt. Just like, "Ah....".

- It took awhile for the ambulance to actually get here (15 minutes). I was surprised – if I actually had done it, I could have been dead. During this time Marni felt that same relaxed, calm feeling she had felt at the start of the weekend when she was hanging out with sister.
- While she waited for ambulance, she calmly packed her bags, borrowed a few things from her sister that she thought she would need (a few novels, tampons, extra cigarettes), and sat down on the sofa while waiting and read an article on sex in the Cosmo Magazine.
- She was eventually transferred from Douglasville Community Hospital Psych Ward to Inner Harbour. I like it here. But when I think about Javier, I feel sad. I miss him very much.