Case Study: Lansing

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In this case, Joseph Lansing, who is an 8-year-old, exhibits signs of antisocial behavior. He was taken from his home where he lived with the mother and young sister after it was suspected that he was being abused physically in the family setup. Evidence of this abuse was in the form of dark spots on his face and arms. The school was obliged to report the suspicious aspects and the report yielded fruit and enabled Lansing to get help and assessment that is aimed at helping him. After being taken from his home, he was placed under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, where it was deemed that he would get appropriate care and support that a family provides without the neglect and abuse that he might have been subjected to in his previous home. His sister was placed under the care of a relative and he has not spoken to her or heard from her in the two months he has been with his foster parents. He has also not had a chance to speak to his biological mother since they were separated.

However, the new arrangement has affected Lansing in ways that have not been fully exhausted and are still under study. Some of the elements that may have been affected include his self-drive, sense of motivation, attention, and concentration, and his ability to socialize with others in a constructive manner that does not involve hostilities and fear. On the positive side, when Lansing was repeated in his school, he managed to regain his good performance and almost made it to the advanced-proficient range tier in the areas of writing and citizenship. Additionally, from a year of missing classes significantly, he transitioned to a period of faithful attendance of classes, only missing one day unexcused.

Regardless of the apparent triumph on the academic side, Lansing still has some issues that seem to gnaw at his inner self. The disarray in his family has undoubtedly had a tremendous impact on his life and his view as well as attitudes. For example, despite the fact that he seems to be back on track with his education, he indicates that he needs to see and be with his mother. This is demonstrated when he contemplates bringing a gun to school and discloses the desire to his fellow students. He keeps aloof and says that he thinks bringing the gun to the school is the easiest way that he can be reunited with his mother, who is in jail at the moment.

His social-emotional assessment was conducted by getting his teacher, and both foster parents to rank him based on a list of behavior that they observe in his character. The hyperactivity in Lansing was deemed to be clinically insignificant by the ratings of the parents and the teacher. The same applies to the characteristics associated with aggression and conduct problems. In the area of anxiety and externalizing problems, the issue seems to be significant at school than at home, the parents do not believe that Lansing is aggressive and directs this aggressiveness towards others but the teacher believes so. This can be due to the fact that the teacher gets to observe the student interact with a much larger group as opposed to parents who may only know him for the behavior he exhibits while with them.

With regards to depression, somatization, and internalizing, the teacher’s ratings are within the average score of between 41-59 except for the score of depression, which is a bit higher, just over 60. Mrs. Smith’s rankings are within the average score and Mr. Smith’s ratings are below the average. Therefore, at school, it would appear that the student exhibits significant potential for developing depression than is noticeable at home. With regards to problems and atypicality, Mrs. Porter, as well as the parents agree that the risk is average. The parents’ ratings with regards to Lansing being withdrawn indicate that it is a clinically insignificant issue but the teacher notes that it is a clinically significant issue, well past 70 on the scale. Pertaining to the attention problems, the rating of the teacher indicates that the student is at risk while that of the parents indicates that his attention span has problems that are of clinical significance.

From the teacher’s ratings, it is evident that Lansing has problems in his learning that place him at high risk clinically and are of significance. In the area of adaptability, Mrs. Porter’s assessment places Lansing in a score range that is clinically significant while the parents place him in score ranges that are average. When it comes to social skills, Mrs. Smith places the child in the T-Score Range of 30 and below which indicates that the issue is clinically significant. However, the foster father and the teacher place him in the average category. In matters of leadership, the parties deem Lansing as being at risk or average. Mrs. Porter deems his study skills as being average. Finally, the adaptive skills composite for Lansing is at risk for the foster mother, and the teacher while the foster father views this as average.

The information that has been gathered about Lansing so far helps in determining his mindset and gives a glimpse into his behavior that can help in formulating a solution for him. However, the information gathered is largely subjective and for it to be effective, it would require to be corroborated with verified empirical methods for determining the exact behavior of the boy. For example, the depression score in the above case varies between the teacher and the parents. The teacher believes that there is a higher significance to the depressive elements while the parents see no such concern, but also rank it high. Now, this is not definitive and it does not mean that Lansing is depressed but rather it is an indicator that Lansing could actually be depressed.

Therefore, for every one of these scores, an indication can be deduced and pursued in detail so as to verify its existence. In the case of depression, for example, it would then be mandatory for a specialist to examine Lansing and verify whether he actually shows signs of depression. Such conditions are often complex and can give numerous false positives. For example, it would be hard to tell whether Lansing is actually depressed or if he is simply stressed for some time and would get over the situation. Careful monitoring and observation must, therefore, be carried out. To effectively carry out such monitoring, it is necessary to gather additional information that is specific to the conditions suspected to be manifesting in Lansing. Therefore, additional information to be gathered can be gotten from sources such as the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is also important to gather information from psychiatric professionals and behavioral experts. Therefore, in addition to the BASC ratings, which provide indicators into the possible issue in the behavior of Lansing.

The tools and technologies that would be pertinent in making a competent decision in this case range from data analysis tools to diagnostics tools provided by health institutions and reputable technology companies (Regier, Kuhl, & Kupfer, 2013). For example, the Achenbach system of empirically based assessment tool can be used to assess the emotional and mental health of the patient (Ucdavis Campus, 2008). For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders is a tool that can help health practitioners identify the various types of mental issues that befall individuals.

One of the main issues, in this case, is the inability of Lansing to speak with his mother or even meet her. Even though the mother was a victim of substance abuse, and has been placed in a court-mandated facility, she is still the child’s mother and played a role in his upbringing. Considering that Lansing is young and only 8 years of age, he likely did not understand the complex issues that surrounded his mother and ultimately led to her incarceration. The child may simply see that the mother was taken away and he was forced into a foster home, which can be dangerous. This notion that the mother was taken from him is stronger due to the fact that it was not explained to Lansing. The transition to the foster home then must have been drastic from his perspective. It is important that change of environment is explained to a child, and even adults carefully in order to promote swift integration into the new environment.

Another issue that can be noted in this case is the fact that the sister to Lansing was taken away from him also. Suddenly, Lansing came from a family he knew to one that was dysfunctional and filled with strangers. In fact, the responsible authorities in the matter noted that this arrangement was far from ideal. The brain responds to this separation by making Lansing hostile towards other people. He can develop feelings of hatred and contempt for fellow human beings because he blames them in part for the separation and the associated pain he suffered when his mother was taken away from him. This may explain the behavior of keeping aloof and the desire to bring a gun to school so that he can use it in a manner that would land him into a cell right next to that of his mother.

It is also possible that depression is an issue in this case. Unlike the case of anxiety that can happen due to the fast-paced nature of things in Lansing’s life, depression can happen even when everything is well explained and laid out. Therefore, the development of depression would arise in cases where normal sadness would have emanated. For example, if an unjust punishment could have led Lansing to feel sad under normal circumstances, it can quickly turn into a heart-wrenching episode that results into mild to severe episodes of depression that could require medical attention. Lansing would likely feel that the world has turned against him and he would naturally try to find ways to push back and get back his old life which may have been imperfect but tolerable to him than anything that he has been offered currently, despite the fact that the current provisions may actually be better than his previous ones.

This case can be described by a number of theories that seek to explain what aspects of a person affect their mental development and wellbeing, but the one that is relevant to this paper is the social/emotional theory of 'mental illness' (Scheff, 2013). This theory applies in this case due to the fact that unlike other theories, it factors in the aspects of society and surroundings in the mental health of a person. It states that mental issues have both an individual and societal aspect to them. For example, in the case of Lansing, it is possible that he feels ashamed of the fact that his parents are not with him and his family is dysfunctional. Due to this feeling of shame, Lansing would likely engage in self-pity and this would, in turn, result in a spiraling cycle of events that later awaken dark emotions that may be existent but dormant.

Therefore, the needs, in this case, are; love, confidence, and lack of belonging. Lansing does not feel loved. This is made clear by his desire to carry a gun to school so that he could wind up going to his mother in prison. This does not mean that the foster parents are not loving, it simply means that Lansing has a perception that he is not loved. It is important to determine to what extent the boy is emotionally attached to the mother and why he seems to find it hard to let go. Issues such as bullying and harassment should be checked to see what it is that causes anxiety in Lansing and prevents him from fitting in the society as it is now.

Lack of belonging is also a significant issue in this case. Lansing has to find his place in the current family setting and create some distance from the biological mother. This is only possible by explaining to him the issues of the matter and clarifying his role and that of his new parents. This would help him develop confidence in himself and his surroundings and prevent a spiral of emotions that can be dark and negative.

The priority, in this case, is the aspect of love. If Lansing can know that he is loved by the foster parents and that they are not a replacement for his mother, then he can learn to adapt with time. This would still be important even if he was to be transferred to live with relatives. He needs an environment of love and this would make him feel loved and cherished. When this happens, he would stop focusing on negative issues and get cultured into an environment of positivity.

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