

Assessment of Sally Parker

Letter of Referral

There is a decline in Sally's academic life and social functioning. Sally now withdrew from her social circle, stopping communication with her friends all together. Academically, Sally is functioning poorly as well. She has had some unexplained absences throughout the semester and has been unable to complete all the assignments. She appears to be irritated when support is being offered.

Sally's parents separated when she was in 7th grade, and since then she has had sporadic contact with her mother. Her mother is moving to another town with another man, which would further reduce the contact between herself and Sally. Sally exhibited abnormal behaviour patterns as well. She appears teary and tired at times, and she wears jumpers despite the weather being warm. Working long hours, Sally's father is rarely at home and has been unable to schedule a meeting with school staff to discuss future plans regarding Sally's situation.

Interview Notes

Interview #1 (Interview with Sally)

Date: 08.06.2014

The interview between Sally and psychologist Monique Elsom detailed several important points. First of all, it has become clear to us that Sally's decline in academic and social life is not caused by anything that happened within the school. The main cause of her decline in social and academic life is the fact that her mother moved to another town with a man she does not like. Sally's mother left the family around two years ago, and now Sally says that she 'will never have the chance to see or hear from

her again'. Sally appears to be deeply and emotionally bonded with her mother because her mother leaving her has upset her tremendously. Sally experienced anxiety and mood difficulties when her mother left the family, and now her mood difficulties seem to be deteriorating, endangering both her academic and social lives.

Sally is, by no means, close to her father or her younger brother. Not only does her father work split shifts and is rarely home, but he would also speak to Sally in an angry voice when he was home. Sally's younger brother, according to Sally, is closer to Sally's father than he is to her mother, so their mother leaving the town with another man does not appear to affect Sally's brother at all. Neither Sally's father nor her brother noticed anything unusual with Sally's condition recently.

Notably, Sally fell out of her previous social circle because she had a big fight with her friends. Now she hangs out with a group of friends who smoke marijuana on the weekends. She is also self-conscious about her own body image. Although she knows that she is not overweight, she still chooses to wear baggy clothes to cover up her body.

Interview #2 (Interview with Mr. Parker)

Date: 08.06.2014

Despite all the issues presented in Sally's academic and social life and her behaviour, Mr. Parker simply attributed the issue to the fact that Sally is going through the "Year 9 crazy stage" as it is what happens to kids when they get to 9th grade according Mr. Parker's friends. It was not until the school notified him on Sally's issue that he started to realize that things have been difficult for Sally. Mr.

Parker admitted that he has been quite snappy towards Sally because he is exhausted when he gets home from work.

According to Mr. Parker, Sally's mother experienced postpartum depression after she gave birth to Sally's younger brother, and there is a reported maternal family history of depression.

Interview #3 (English Teacher Interview) Date: 10.06.2014

Ms. Long has recently noticed a decrease of quality in Sally's work and a change in Sally's attitude towards classwork and school. Sally struggles to remain focused and has been fidgeting and wearing big jumpers to school despite the weather being warm. Sally mentioned to Ms. Long that there was no food in the house because her father forgets to purchase groceries due to his busy work. Ms. Long has also heard Sally saying things to express her inferiority and hopelessness.

Interview #4 (Interview with Maths Teacher)

According to Mr. Lockrose, Sally's math teacher, Sally has recently failed a weekly math quiz and has stopped handing in work. She used to perform well in math but now she struggles to keep up with her peers. Besides, Sally had become irritable towards Mr. Lockrose when he tried to ask her what was wrong. Sally also appears to be anxious and on edge recently. Mr. Lockrose has tried to call Mr. Parker but he was yet to return his calls.

Interview # 5 (Interview with Guidance Officer)

Date: 13.06.2014

Sally made an appointment to see Mr. Noble a month ago. Sally appeared to be irritable and distressed during the appointment, in which Sally disclosed that she feels rejected by her mother and that her father and brother do not seem to be affected at all by this issue. Mr. Noble expressed concerns regarding possible self-harming behaviour or body image issues for Sally. Although Mr. Noble contacted Sally's father, he did not seem to be worried.

Clinic Phone Call

Date: 01.06.2014

In the phone call, Mr. Parker reported that Sally has been moody and grumpy recently, locking herself in her room and hardly ever comes out. She experienced a drop in her grade and stopped communicating with her friends. It seems like Mr. Parker holds many negative views towards his ex-wife, blaming his wife for what has happened to Sally. Although being busy, Mr. Parker arranged a meeting with Monique next Thursday to discuss matters further regarding Sally's condition.

School Report Card

For the first two semesters in 2013, Sally did well on all the subjects, scoring at expected level or above expected level on all courses except Manual Arts (Wood) in the first semester. In 2014, we have seen a steady decline in her grades. Sally scored below expected level on three subjects including Maths, Science, and LOTE (Italian).

Risk & Protective Factor

Single parenting is the biggest risk factor for Sally. Single parenting is associated with a higher risk of developing depression among adolescents (Daryanani et al., 2016). Considering that Sally appeared to be teary and tired at times, which are some of the typical symptoms of depression, mental health professionals need to examine whether or not Sally has depression. The environment of the family also plays a critical role in shaping the life trajectory of adolescents. Since children are emotionally bonded with their parents, divorce and separation can cause children to develop mental health problems because attachment is no longer being maintained between the parents and children (Halonen et al., 2021). Sally separated from her mother at the age of twelve, which is a time when children are rapidly developing physically and mentally. During this age, children go through some major physiological, mental, and psychosocial changes. Most importantly, a secure attachment between parents and children is what ensures the benign development of children. Secure attachment between parents and children is able to reduce the possibility of children engaging in risk behaviours, suffering from mental health issues, and secure attachment allows children to enhance their social skills as well as their coping strategies when facing obstacles in life (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Furthermore, single parenting is associated with a higher possibility of criminal involvement among adolescents (Kroese et al., 2020). From what the interview with Sally entails, her new friends smoke marijuana on the weekends, which is a major risk

factor for Sally to get involved in substance abuse and ultimately criminal involvement as marijuana is illegal in many parts of the world.

Another major risk factor for Sally is her family history of depression. As Mr. Parker stated in the interview and phone call, Sally's mother suffered from depression after giving birth to Sally's brother. Adolescents with a family history of depression are more likely than adolescents without a family history of depression to develop depression (Sander & McCarty). Knowing that depression runs in Sally's family is important for Mr. Parker and mental health professionals to take corresponding measures to prevent or treat depression in Sally.

One of the biggest protective factors for Sally is the support given by school. It is noted that social support from the community and school can facilitate the development of adolescents, allowing them to maintain a high level of self-esteem and sense of integrity (Triana et al., 2019). Sally's school has kept a close monitor on Sally's academic and social life, as well as Sally's behaviour pattern, and the school has also made referrals to mental health services, which is a huge protective factor for Sally. Family relationships, specifically the relationship between parents and children and the relationship between siblings, can influence resilience and self-esteem among adolescents (Triana et al., 2019). If school or other community resources can help Sally, her father, and her younger brother develop a closer and more caring relationship, then Sally is expected to benefit from this family relationship as a protective factor.

Theoretical Model

One of the theoretical models pertaining to Sally's case is Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. In this model, individuals are influenced by several interrelated external systems involving family, community, culture, society, and ideologies. (Johnson & Malow-Iroff, 2008). In Sally's case, Sally is greatly affected by her own family, in which her mother left the family and is moving to another place. Also, Sally is influenced by her community, where her school is trying to render her the help she needs.

The theoretical model that is best to describe the at-risk behaviours that Sally is displaying is the ABCX stress model. In the ABCX model, the A factor refers to the stressor or the event that is causing the stress, and the B factor refers to the resources that people could use to cope with the stress. The C factor is the perception that individuals or families hold towards the stressor. X means the likelihood of a crisis (Gullotta et al., 2015). In Sally's case, the separation between herself and her mother and her mother moving to another place are the events that cause Sally stress, which is A factor in the ABCX model. The resources that Sally has, which is the B factor, include support from school, mental health services, and her own family. The perception that Sally has of her mother leaving the family and moving to another place is the C factor.

The ABCX model covers every part of Sally's situation. To be more specific, the main cause of Sally's decline in behaviour and social and academic life is her mother and the perception Sally has of the events related to her mother. Sally's mother left

the family and was planning to move to another town with a man Sally does not like, which caused Sally stress. All these events are the A factor and stressor for Sally.

Furthermore, Sally perceives her mother leaving her and moving to another place as negative matters because she disclosed to Elsom in the interview that she fears she will never have the chance to see and talk to her mother again. Because of Sally's negative perception of events related to her mother, Sally further thought that 'there is no point in trying anymore', she stopped talking to her friends, has been absent from school throughout the semester, and has stopped completing assignments. So factor C, which is the perception Sally has on events related to her mother, is what also causes Sally to function poorly in terms of academic and social life.

Luckily, Sally received support from her school. Nevertheless, her father and younger brother appear to be of no help in Sally's situation. Sally's father advised in the interview that he has no idea what to do to get Sally back to normal. Sally's brother also appeared to be unaffected by Sally's mother or Sally at all. As mentioned before, family relationships are crucial to the development and well-being of adolescents. If Sally can receive attentiveness and care from her father and brother, she can expect to develop higher resilience and attain an increase in her academic and social life. All the resources that Sally has, including her school, mental health services, and her family, are the B factor.

The X factor, the likelihood of crisis, increased dramatically for Sally. Sally's mother leaving the family and moving to another town (factor A), combined with Sally's negative perception of the events, increased the chance of delinquent behavior

in Sally. However, the attention and support given to Sally from her school (factor B), to an extent, decreased the possibility of Sally engaging in more risk behaviours.

Final Paper Assessment

References

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