

CASE STUDY

Applying Needs Based Practices Communication in Probation

By Michael S. Oden

Overview of Observable Facts:

- Defendant was "touched sexually" by Aunt (Mother's sister) for approximately 2 years (9 to 11 years)
- Defendant joined Lennox 13th St. gang
- Defendant was given alcohol, money, toys, gifts to keep silent
- Defendant's mother trusted her son was in a safe environment
- Defendant never told family member's or anyone about the experience with his Aunt
- Defendant consumed various narcotics (marijuana, cocaine, primos, shermisticks speed) to escape feelings.
- Defendant was considered a problem child by his family
- Defendant has behavioral issues at school and at home
- Defendant spent custody time in various juvenile and adult institutions: (Central, Los Padornos and Sylmar Juvenile Hall, Camp Afferlbaugh, LA County's Men's Central Jail, Bizcailutz and Mira Loma Detention Centers, Twin Towers and a few State Prisons.
- Defendant was arrested for narcotic possession and placed on Probation-Proposition 36

Story:

In our initial interview I observed the Defendant, as nervous and tentative. I assured the Defendant that whatever we discussed will be kept confidential. I stated to the Defendant that if he was willing, we could discover the "root" cause of his drug use. I explained to him that his excessive drug use is the effect. I wanted to know the "cause." I mentioned that my reason for using this process is to discover the "whys" of his excessive drug use and also what "needs" were being met by doing so.

The Defendant stated that his life changed for the worse when he was being supervised by his Mother's sister after school for several hours. He stated that his Aunt gave him alcohol (Jack Daniel's on the rocks) so that he could be incoherent. It was at this time his Aunt would have sexual intercourse and touch him in ways that he did not really understand. The Defendant stated that he didn't really know what was happening to him so he tried to block out each experience as it occurred. After several months of having contact with his Aunt, the Defendant stated that he was too afraid to say anything to his parents because he was too embarrassed and ashamed. He mentioned that every time he went to his Aunt's house, he would try to numb himself and try to forget what was happening to him.

This behavior continued for approximately 2 years or until he was old enough not to be supervised.

Due to these reoccurring events, the Defendant stated he became angry, hostile and rebellious. He said he had all these pent up emotions and he didn't know how to identify them, what to do with them or how to get rid of them. He stated he tried to find stability in the gang life (Lennox 13). However, he saw his life spinning out of control b going in and out of Juvenile Hall as a minor.

As a young adult, he caused a lot of stress on his family by consuming drugs on a consistent basis. Because of his behavior, he was arrested several times and spent time in the men's county jail and the California state prison system.

The Process of Restoration:

During this session I then began to decompress him by giving him an understanding what he was "feeling" and what "needs" were being met or not met during the event with his Aunt.

First and foremost, I wanted to have the Defendant understand why using narcotics, excessively, and joining the Lennox 13th St. gang was important to him.

The Defendant needed to understand what he was feeling and needing at the time of his tragic experience. From the information given, it appears he was feeling helpless, sad, lonely, distant, depressed, scared, afraid, furious, confused, uncomfortable, embarrassed, ashamed and guilty. The "needs" that were not being met by his Aunt were those of: choice, self-empowerment, comfort, self-worth, self-respect, being heard, control, empathy all being met tragically.

I explained to the Defendant that he had numerous feelings operating simultaneously which caused him the feeling of being over-whelmed or depressed. I, then, explained to him that his excessive use of narcotic was meeting his "need" for temporary peace and harmony in his life by numbing the aforementioned feelings. I explained to the Defendant that drug use is one of many; common ways a person will meet is his/her needs, tragically, when a debilitation event occurs in a person's life.

After the Defendant was stopped being supervised by his Aunt, he joined the "Lennox 13th street gang. By joining the gang, the Defendant had the feelings of joy, excitement, content, playful excited, happy and relieved. The interpersonal needs that were being met were those of choice, identity, self-empowerment, bonding, self-worth, self-respect purpose, connection, trust, appreciation, predictability, stability, emotional safety, friendship, validation and community. The Defendant went from being a powerless individual to a, tragically, empowered individual by being part of a group that meets their need for respect, validation, acceptance and community, tragically.

The Defendant stated that for the first time in his life someone made sense as to how his feelings were directly related to why he behaved as he did in the past and how that related to which of his needs were being met or not met. The Defendant mentioned that he was thoroughly relieved and at peace knowing he is not this terrible person he thought he was because of how he behaved in the past. He now understands and is aware he was only meeting his needs as he believed they needed to be met.

However, the Defendant needed to understand that the feelings he experienced in the past were those same feelings that caused him to use narcotics in the present time. The problem with most individuals is that they are unable to identify those feelings.

Now that the Defendant has identified his feelings and understands what needs of his were not being met at that particular time, he has the ability to choose to make any life serving adjustments he sees fit.

Future Direction:

The Defendant had needs that were being met through excessive drug use: peace and harmony; self-worth, self-empowerment, choice, emotional safety. (tragically)

The next step would be to reconnect him with getting those needs met in a way that is life serving. (Example: When he is in a situation where he believes his needs of respect of fairness are not being met, he will make a conscious decision to

verbalize the need that is not being met and make a request to get that need met.)
The Defendant will also need to identify his needs and what he is feeling at the present time and make any necessary adjustments that are life serving to him.

Evaluations and Outcomes:

- The Defendant is feeling relieved, hopeful and inspired about his new found understanding and awareness of his situation regarding his feelings and needs.
- The Defendant can now apply a need and a feeling to each situation for his past and present events.
- The Defendant is looking forward to moving on with his life and with his new tools. He mentioned that he will apply them when necessary.
- The Defendant has reconnected with family.
- The Defendant has become more trusting and expressive because he has become empowered by his understand of his feelings and needs.

Conclusion:

- Since the conclusion of our NVC sessions, the Defendant was inspired enough to enroll and attend a graphic arts school in Santa Monica, Ca.
- The Defendant empowered himself to write a letter to his Aunt describing her misdeeds. (Certified Letter) To which she was banned from the family and has taken ill.
- The Defendant has the support of his family.
- The Defendant attends support groups for those who have been in his situation.