

CASE STUDY

Applying Needs Based Practices of Communication in Probation
By Michael S. Oden

Overview of Observable Facts:

- Mother divorced Father when Defendant was 14 years old
- First divorce a 14 years of age, sister stayed with the Mother
- Second divorce at 19 years of age
- Defendant's Father was a Priest of a parish in Chicago
- Defendant lived with the Father after the first divorce
- Father spent many hours at the job, had high expectations for his son(defendant)
- Defendant was not allowed to play sports or interact with other kids
- Defendant had to perform church duties
- Defendant left home of Father after high school: attended Marquette University
- Defendant played rugby and began to use cocaine with friends
- Cocaine used increased each year
- Cocaine increased confidence to play rugby and to talk to girls
- Cocaine helped cope with fantasies (unreachable goals) dating cheerleaders, becoming a successful lawyer (believed he was not as smart as the others), he wanted to keep up with his classmates and to study more.
- Defendant quit cocaine use after college for 7 years
- Defendant was 29 years of age when daughter was born
- Defendant moved to California due to wife's new job promotion. Defendant had to quit his job.
- Defendant hates his job, marital problems; drugs and alcohol begin
- On 8/02 Defendant gets into care accident while drinking
- Divorces wife to save the house
- Defendant begins to consume hard liquor (whiskey, brandy, etc)
- Defendant stated wife always in control, makes all of the decisions just like his father. Defendant has no say in any family matters.
- Defendant is told to leave the house and fend for himself.

Story:

During our interview, I asked client to describe his life and to describe to me when and why drugs and alcohol became an important part of his life. I explained to him that my reason for using this process is to discover the "whys" of his excessive use of drugs and alcohol.

The Defendant shared that when he was 15 years of age his Mother wanted a divorce for his Father, due to his spending the majority of his time with the ministry. Client went to live with his Father while his sister went to live with his Mother. Client was feeling upset, angry, confused and helpless with the split up of the family. While living with his father, Client stated that he was never allowed to play any sports. He was instructed to assist his father with his church duties. Client's inability to express himself and be creative proceeded from the ages of 15 to 18 years of age or until Client left home and went away to college at the Marquette University. Client began to use cocaine for the first time in college during his freshmen year with his newly acquainted friends. He also played rugby. He mentioned that his cocaine increased every year because it gave him confidence to play rugby and to talk to the opposite sex. He also stated that cocaine usage assisted him in coping with his unreachable

fantasies such as, dating cheerleaders for becoming a lawyer. Client didn't believe he was as smart as his peers and the cocaine assisted him in studying longer which would increase his grade point average. Client, subsequently, graduated from college and did not consume any type of drug for the next 7 years.

Client was later married to a woman who had the consistent behavior and personality of his father. He stated that his wife had everything under her control and left no room for Client to have any choice (autonomy) in their family matters. He had a daughter at the age of 29 and then moved to LA due to his wife getting a promotion. Therefore, he had to quite his current job in Chicago and Obtain new employment in California. Client didn't like his job and began to have marital problems. Because of these situations, he begins to consume drugs and alcohol, excessively. He got into a car accident while drinking in August of 2002. So his wife and child would not be homeless, he proceeded with a divorce to save the house. He consumed more hard liquor, whiskey and bourbon. Due to the accident, Client was placed on Proposition 36 and is currently in treatment.

The Process of Restoration:

During Session: I then began to decompress him regarding what needs were being met and not being met with the break up of his family and him giving to obey the orders of his father.. It appeared the break up of he family as due to he father spending most of his time developing his work for the ministry. His mother's needs for connection, respect, emotional safety, affection, being heard and family were not being met, hence her wanting a divorce. I empathized with the mother so Client could understand why she made the decision to leave. I also wanted Client to understand that need to blame himself for her wanting the divorce.

I then discussed with Client the needs that were not met during his preadolescent and adolescent years. It appeared that Client never had any autonomy, choice or identity at this time in his life. He also was unable to express himself because his father demanded that he follow his instructions. So, Client had no say in what he, really, wanted to do. He submitted, himself, to his father's authority for the next 5 years.

Once in college, Client began to express his autonomy by joining the rugby team and consuming drugs with his peers. For the first time in his life he believed he was allowed to express himself, make choices and become independent from his past. His cocaine use increased because it empowered him, causing him to behave with confidence that he didn't believe he could possess without it, as well as, becoming more efficient with his studies so he could keep up with his peers, academically. For 7 years Client didn't consume any drugs. It appeared that Client went back to obeying and pleasing other, giving up his autonomy. He mentioned he married a woman who possessed the same characteristics as his father. He, again, followed and obeyed her every word as he did with his father. Client became overwhelmed when he had to move to California due to his wife's promotion, in which he had to give up a job he enjoyed. Client began to consume alcohol and drugs to meet his need for peace, comfort and autonomy. I explained to him that making the choice to drink and consume drugs was the only time in his life where he had a choice and independence in his life due to the feelings of helplessness, embarrassment and loneliness.

Client stated that for the first time in his life someone had made complete sense of his behavior and how his feelings were directly related to what needs are being met or not met at that time. He mentioned that he feels a complete sense of relief and peace. He can now see what had transpired over the years and make the necessary changes he desires because he chooses to and because of his new found awareness and understanding.

Future Direction:

Client had needs that were being met, tragically, by drug use; autonomy, choice, self-worth/self-respect, self-expression. The next steps would be to reconnect him in getting those needs met in a life serving way. (Example: If he and his wife were to go to restaurant after church, he would make a request as to where the family will eat, instead of his wife) He will also learn to say, "no" if he chooses not to participate in an event he doesn't wish to participate.

Evaluations & Outcomes:

- Client is feeling hopeful and inspired about his newly discovered truth.
- Client now understands what he had been feeling over the years and what unmet needs were connected to those feelings.
- Client is looking forward to getting more insight into his life and what changes he can make to empower himself.
- Client no longer wants to be "ordered around" by his ex-wife.
- Client has learned to say "no" to his ex-wife.
- Client has stopped blaming himself for his past behaviors.