

In-Class Skill Building Assessment

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I have never been the type of person to role play; I am uncomfortable being anyone but myself, so to say I was nervous when this project was assigned would be an understatement. On the other hand, I was extremely excited to put my newly learned case management skills to the test. When first given the scenarios, I was drawn to Claire, the twenty-eight year old schizophrenic who wanted to have a child. Although I thought it would be more fun to work on her case as a case manager rather than adopt her as a persona, I decided to choose this case. There were a lot of problems that could potentially arise with this case, and I thought it would be fun to throw my case manager for a few loops. Claire had been diagnosed with schizophrenia at age twenty-two, and she is also on anti-depressants. In order to have a healthy child, Claire needs to get off her meds, but that makes her nervous because her husband, William, has never seen one of her full-blown episodes.

Playing the client was more fun than I expected it to be, but it was also difficult at times. I like being able to make up my own situations and throw in as many problems and be as stubborn as I want to. I did not plan ahead though, so when we were actually in class I felt pressured to come up with an answer fast. It did not flow as well as it would if I had been an actual client, and sometimes that made the interview a little bit awkward. When I feel awkward or nervous, I laugh, which just throws everybody off. It was interesting to see how the case manager reacted to that though. I have been to therapy before, but this was much different now that I know what the case manager is looking for and what kind of questions they are looking to ask. Knowing what I do now changed my experience because I felt less weird about the case manager taking notes and looking at me. I am usually uncomfortable when people look at me, but this time I knew it was because they were looking for body language. At the same time, that made me more self-conscious about what I was doing. It was hard for me to really take to heart

who my persona was and how she would really be acting in this situation. This might have thrown some mixed signals to my case manager, and I imagine it might have confused him at times because I was very focused on what I was doing. Needless to say, it was all somewhat awkward, but I think that by the end of the role-playing activity, I had really gotten it down.

My experience as a case manager was very similar to my experience as a client in many ways. My client was Bethanne Peterson (played by Olivia), a hoarder. It was hard for me to get into the mindset of a case manager because I knew it was not a real client and I did not have experience interviewing clients. The first couple meetings were hard and full of laughter, as neither of us really knew what to do and felt a little silly. It almost felt stressful, because the client did not say much our first meeting, but I needed to get enough information to build case notes. I think Olivia had a hard time getting into character like I did, so some of the awkwardness was just her trying to find Bethanne's personality. After getting past the sillies we began with, I had a great time being a case manager. When I was in elementary school, I had decided that I wanted to be a therapist so I joined my school's Conflict Managers team. Being a case manager in this class felt like my dreams of being a therapist come true. I was able to help Bethanne discover some of the roots of her hoarding and was there to encourage her along in her progress. I even felt real happiness when Bethanne continued to progress with her plan.

Being an observer was an entirely different experience altogether. It was frustrating at times because I was seeing some excellent skills they were using that I had forgotten about. Even as a client, I was able to observe my case manager's skills. Jared was my case manager, and he was very caring and empathetic. Those skills were very helpful with Claire because in her situation, she was scared and needed someone gentle. Olivia was Quan's (played by Jared) case manager, and I noticed her style was completely different. Olivia had to use humor and a little bit

of tough love with Quan because in his particular situation, he came in angry and stubborn. With the age he was at, he needed humor to bring him out of his shell and then a little bit of toughness to get him to really think about the steps he wanted to take. Quan was a very complex individual, he was smart, but didn't seem to have any work ethic. It was quite the learning experience to watch this from the outside. At first, Olivia had tried being gentle, but that did not get much out of Quan. By being an observer, I was able to see not only how a case manager needs to shift their attitude to fit the client, but also how this affects the behavior and mood of the client. I think this is why an observer was assigned to each group. It is different looking at it from the outside and being able to really pay attention to body language.

Reviewing the case files of my peers was also a learning experience. I thought I had built my case file pretty well, but while going through theirs, I found some things I could have improved on. My peers focused a lot on what the client was doing and read their moods, while I focused more on what exactly they said and how I thought to interpret it. If I had documented their body language along with their words, I could have gone into more depth in my analysis to create a more helpful plan. My peers were also very clear with their goal setting sheets. I was a bit vague with who was to do what, but they did a very good job at outlining it. I especially learned a lot from Jared's goal settings sheet. Jared used his as a continuation, so he would write down what was accomplished, what needed work, and what he still needed to help with. I think this was a great idea because the case manager was able to work with the client in a visual way that represented a timeline.

Although doing this role-playing skills-building practice scared me at first, now that I reflect on it, it was an excellent activity. I learned a lot through this process, not only about being a case manager, but also about what affect case managers have on clients. This activity helped

me better understand how our choices, even the ones we are not aware of, impact the client and their behavior. Knowing this can also help me become a better case manager because I can look into my client's behavior and figure out what went wrong (or right!) so I can adjust what I am doing to better fit the client.