

Contemporary Mental Health Case Scenario

By Katie-Ann Lillicrap

Case study

Sage is a 26-year-old doctoral candidate in English literature at the local university. She is in good standing in her program and has plans to enter the job market in the fall. In your intake, she tells you she thinks she is “fat” and has been self-conscious about her body since the sixth grade, at which time she began menstruating and developing breasts earlier than the other girls in her class. She was teased for needing a bra and remembers feeling “chubby, too big, and just wanting to be small like her younger sister.” She started dieting in the seventh grade, following strict rules for weeks (e.g., she recalls the grapefruit only diet), then transitioning into what she called “bad” weeks. During these times, she would stock up on candy bars and other snack foods and eat them, often in her bedroom late at night. Her parents became concerned and tried to strictly limit her dieting. This led to eating “normal” during the day and binging on those candy bars she kept hidden in her bedroom at night if she felt sad, scared, or mad. She grew into a habit of eating to feel better – relief that was only temporary, as she would feel ashamed about what she had done and resolve to not do it again. In college, her pattern of emotional eating continued, which felt more distressing to her because of the pressure to look “as pretty and thin as the other girls.” In spring of her freshman year she experimented with throwing up after the late-night eating and found that, at least in the minutes that followed, she felt like she had much more control and believed this would help her to prevent the weight gain she so dreaded. She fell into a vicious cycle of late-night binges (typically consuming about 7 candy bars in 15 minutes, during which times Sage described feeling very out of control) followed by making herself throw up. In college, she engaged in these binge-purge episodes about 6 nights/week. At present, she is having a harder time hiding the episodes because she lives with her boyfriend; she estimates that they occur about 4 nights per week. The times when she feels the most compelled to binge and purge are when she has a major presentation coming up in her doctoral program and when she gets in a fight with her boyfriend. Her BMI is in the normal range, but she says she needs to lose weight. She wants to stop binging and purging because she does not want her boyfriend to find out, but she is also afraid that if she stops, she will gain weight.

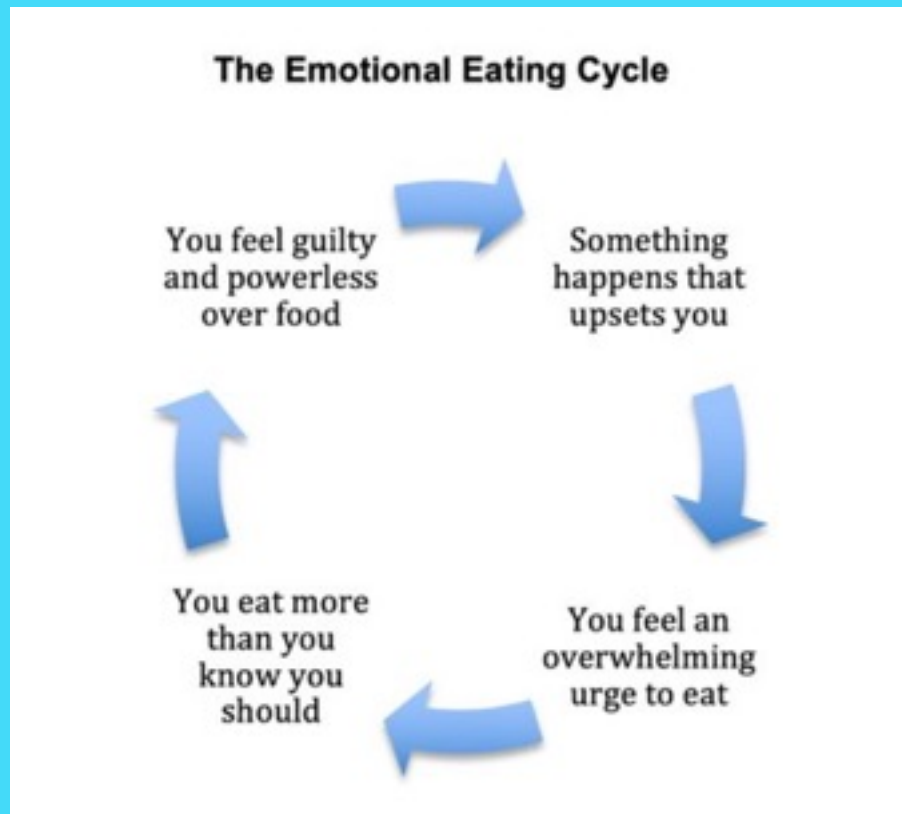
Signs and symptoms

- Bingeing and purging behaviours.
- Secretive eating behaviours.
- Distorted perception of body shape or weight.
- Feelings of guilt and shame around food and eating.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Disappearing after eating.
- Feeling tired or lethargic.
- Stomach pains.
- Constant sore throat.
- Signs of alcohol misuse.
- Low self-esteem.



Working with the client

Emotional eating, or eating in response to negative emotional states, has been identified as an "obesogenic" trait that contributes to weight gain and obesity (Croker, H., Cooke, L., & Wardle, J. 2011)



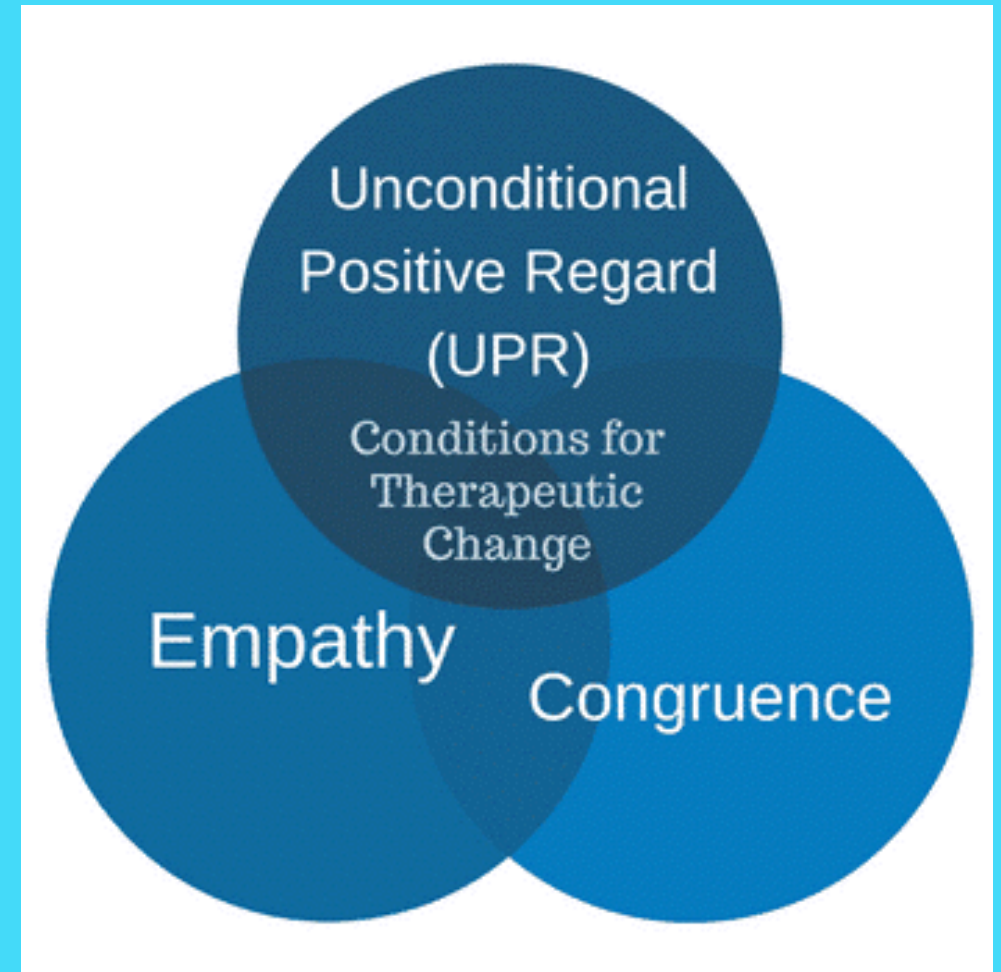
(Helpguide, 2019)

People who are struggling with Bulimia Nervosa do this as they feel as though they have that control over their feelings and thoughts for a few minutes

For example, when a woman feels sad and failed, she becomes hypercritical of her body considering it the cause of her failures («... they reject me because I am ugly...»), while when a man feels sad and failed, he becomes hypercritical of himself as a person viewed as a whole" (Schilder, 1950; Slade, 1994).

Person centred approach

There are three main core conditions which are paramount when using person centred approach and this is empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Carl Rogers, 1957). without these three conditions the approach would struggle to be effective with the client and could hinder the therapeutic process instead of helping it.



Central truth for Carl Rodgers was that the client is the one that knows what hurts and where the pain lies and it is the client who, in the final analysis, will discover the way forward (Mearns, Thorne and McLeod, 2013)

What other approaches and treatments are available.

- CBT- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- Medication
- Self help



One of the approaches which is well known for helping people with this mental health disorder is CBT, this is because CBT focusses on the behaviour of the client and is addresses the clients thoughts and feelings, “Relative to other orientations, CBT (particularly for anxiety disorders) is structured, directive, and action-oriented” (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979).

Conclusion

To conclude, from my case study about Sage there seem's to be a lot of depth that could be reached during this therapeutic process as it seems as though Sage has a lot of underlying issues and thoughts about herself, Although I said that I would use person centred approach for this case study I still believe that using person centred could look into Sage's past and dig up all them feelings to why she felt fat and not pretty enough which lead her to binge eating and having the sense of loss of control, but I also think that CBT therapy could also work very well with her mental health disorder as it helps people change the way think about something and changes their behaviour with food which could have a more expositive outcome than person centred.

References:

Society of Clinical psychology (2016) *case study*. Available at: https://www.div12.org/case_study/sage-bulimia-nervosa/ (Accessed:7 December 2019).

Croker,H., Cooke, L., & Wardle,J.(2011). 'Appetitive behaviours of children attending obesity treatment'. *Appetite*, 57(2), p525-529.

Mental health foundation (2019) *Bulimia Nervosa*. Available at <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/b/bulimia-nervosa> (Accessed: 7 December 2019).

NHS (2019) *Bulimia Nervosa*. Available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/> (Accessed: 6 December 2019).

Mearns, Thorne and Mcleod. (2013) *Person Centered Counselling In Action*. 4th ed

Boutelle, Kerri N. Braden, Abby. Knatz-Peck, Stephanie. Anderson, Leslie K. Rhee, Kyung E. (2018) 'An open trial targeting emotional eating among adolescents with overweight or obesity' 26 (1), p.79-92

Federici Ario. 2019 'The effect of physical activity on the perception of body image and well-being during ageing' *Journal of physical education & sport*, 19, p1341-1349

King, Brittany R. Boswell, James F. (2019) 'therapeutic strategies and techniques in early cognitive-behaviour therapy' *Educational Publishing foundation*, 56(1), p35-41.