

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Managing confidentiality and boundaries

Dr. Hannah Lewis is a counselling psychologist working within a university wellbeing service. Earlier in the academic year, she began supporting Tomos Richards, a 20-year-old second-year psychology student. Tomos initially sought help because he was experiencing frequent panic attacks, difficulty sleeping, and overwhelming anxiety about his studies. He described feeling under constant pressure to achieve high grades and was concerned that any academic setback would disappoint his family, who were the first in their household to attend university.

Over several months, Tomos attended weekly sessions and formed a strong therapeutic relationship with Dr. Lewis. He gradually became more comfortable discussing his difficulties and reported that therapy was helping him manage his anxiety. His attendance improved, he began socialising more frequently with friends, and he appeared more confident in his ability to cope with academic challenges.

During one session near the end of the academic year, Tomos disclosed that during particularly stressful periods he had thought about harming himself, although he insisted he had no intention of acting on these thoughts. He became visibly distressed when discussing the issue and repeatedly asked Dr. Lewis not to share this information with anyone else. He explained that he was worried that university staff might view him differently or that the disclosure could affect his future career opportunities.

At the final scheduled session before the summer break, Tomos thanked Dr. Lewis for her help and explained that he did not believe he would have completed the year without her support. He offered to buy her lunch at a nearby café as a gesture of appreciation. Later that evening, Dr. Lewis received a social media friend request from Tomos accompanied by a message saying that he hoped to stay in touch because he felt she was the only person who truly understood him.

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Managing Choice and Responsibility in Long-Term Illness

Dr. Aisha Rahman is a health psychologist working within an NHS diabetes service. She has recently been referred a 48-year-old patient, Gareth Morgan, who was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes six years ago. Although Gareth understands the medical advice provided by healthcare professionals, he has found it difficult to sustain the lifestyle changes recommended by his treatment team.

Gareth works long hours managing a small family business and often prioritises work responsibilities over his own health. He frequently misses appointments and admits that he does not always take his medication as prescribed. His consultant has expressed concern about deteriorating blood glucose control and the possible long-term health consequences.

In sessions with Dr. Rahman, Gareth describes feeling exhausted by constant conversations about diet, exercise, medication, and health risks. He feels that family members and healthcare professionals focus entirely on his diabetes and fail to recognise the pressures he experiences in other areas of his life.

During one appointment, Gareth reveals that he often chooses not to take his medication because he dislikes the side effects. He explains that although his consultant is unaware of this, he wants the information to remain confidential. He tells Dr. Rahman that healthcare professionals would "simply lecture" him if they knew the truth.

Dr. Rahman recognises that Gareth's choices may place him at increased risk of future health complications. At the same time, she understands that Gareth has the right to make decisions about his treatment and wants to preserve the trusting relationship that has begun to develop between them.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Balancing Expectations in School Assessment

Dr Nia Griffiths is an educational psychologist working with several primary schools across South Wales. She has been asked to support 10-year-old Ethan Roberts, whose teachers have become increasingly concerned about his progress in literacy.

Ethan is described as an enthusiastic and creative pupil who participates well in class discussions but struggles significantly with reading and written tasks. His teacher has observed that he often avoids reading aloud and becomes frustrated when required to complete extended written work. Recently, Ethan has begun withdrawing from group activities and has appeared less confident in the classroom.

Ethan's parents believe he may have dyslexia and are keen to obtain a formal diagnosis. They hope that identification of a specific learning difficulty will help him access additional support. The school leadership team is also eager for recommendations because staff are concerned about the widening gap between Ethan and his peers.

During assessment sessions, Ethan tells Nia that he worries his classmates will think he is "stupid" if they discover why he is meeting with her. He says he does not want other children to know that he finds reading difficult. Assessment results suggest some indicators associated with dyslexia, but the evidence is not yet conclusive and further assessment may be required before firm conclusions can be reached.

Meanwhile, both the school and Ethan's parents continue to seek immediate answers regarding diagnosis and intervention.

FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Remaining Objective in a High-Profile Case

Dr. Sophie Patel is a forensic psychologist instructed by the court to assess Daniel Cooper, a 35-year-old man charged with a serious assault. The incident attracted considerable local media attention and has generated strong public opinion about the case.

Court records indicate that Daniel has a longstanding history of severe mental illness, including periods of inpatient psychiatric treatment. At the time of the alleged offence, several witnesses reported unusual behaviour and apparent confusion. Questions have therefore arisen regarding Daniel's mental state and his level of responsibility for the alleged actions.

As part of her assessment, Dr. Patel reviews extensive medical records, police reports, witness statements, and interview data. During a meeting, Daniel shares details about the incident and repeatedly stresses that the psychologist should focus exclusively on information that supports his version of events.

A week later, Daniel's solicitor contacts Dr. Patel to discuss the assessment. The solicitor expresses concern that certain information in the draft report may not be helpful to the defence case and asks whether the wording could be revised to place greater emphasis on Daniel's mental health difficulties.

Dr. Patel is aware that her conclusions may influence significant legal decisions and recognises the importance of maintaining an objective, evidence-based approach throughout the assessment process.

SPORT AND EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Performance, Pressure and Confidentiality

Dr. Owen Davies is a sport and exercise psychologist who works with a regional performance programme. One of the athletes he supports is 19-year-old cyclist Chloe Evans, who has recently been selected to compete at a prestigious national event.

Although Chloe's physical performance remains strong, coaches have become concerned about noticeable changes in her confidence and behaviour. She has become increasingly self-critical and appears anxious before competitions. Training staff report that mistakes that would once have had little impact now seem to affect her significantly.

During consultations, Chloe explains that she feels under considerable pressure to succeed. She worries about disappointing coaches, sponsors, teammates, and family members who have invested heavily in her sporting development. She admits that she has recently considered withdrawing from competition altogether but does not want anyone within the programme to know.

Several days later, Chloe's head coach contacts Dr. Davies requesting information about her progress and asking whether there is "anything the coaching team should know" before the upcoming competition.

Dr. Davies is keen to support Chloe's wellbeing while maintaining productive relationships with the wider performance team.

OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: Protecting Employee Trust During Organisational Change

Dr. Rachel Bennett is an occupational psychologist contracted by Horizon Technologies, a growing software company experiencing increasing rates of stress-related sickness absence and employee turnover.

Company leaders have expressed concern about declining staff morale and have commissioned an organisational wellbeing review. As part of the project, Dr. Bennett conducts surveys, interviews, and focus groups with employees across multiple departments. Staff participation is voluntary and employees are assured that individual responses will remain confidential.

The findings reveal widespread concerns about excessive workloads, unrealistic deadlines, inconsistent management practices, and a perceived lack of organisational support. Many employees speak openly because they believe their comments will be anonymised.

Following presentation of the initial findings, senior managers request access to the raw survey data and interview notes. They explain that they want to identify specific employees who may be influencing negative attitudes within teams. Some members of the leadership team argue that full transparency is necessary if meaningful change is to occur.

Dr. Bennett recognises that sharing identifiable information could undermine employee trust and may discourage honest participation in future wellbeing initiatives. However, she is also conscious that the organisation is funding the project and expects detailed information about the findings.

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Vignette: When Support Extends Beyond the Therapy Room

Dr. Tallulah Morgan is a clinical psychologist working within an NHS chronic pain management service. Several months ago, she began supporting Gareth Davies, a 42-year-old delivery driver who had been referred by a pain consultant following ongoing difficulties adjusting to a long-term back injury sustained at work. Since the injury, Gareth had been unable to return to full-time employment and reported experiencing low mood, frustration, social withdrawal, and increasing anxiety about his financial situation.

Over the course of therapy, Dr. Morgan worked with Gareth to develop coping strategies for managing chronic pain, anxiety, and feelings of loss associated with changes in his lifestyle. Throughout this process, he described therapy as the first place where he felt able to openly discuss the emotional impact of his injury without being judged.

During a session near the end of therapy, Gareth became emotional while discussing a period several months earlier when his pain and financial worries had felt overwhelming. He disclosed that he had experienced thoughts that his family might be better off without him. Although he was clear that he had never made plans to act on these thoughts and denied any current intention of harming himself, he appeared distressed while discussing the issue. He repeatedly asked Dr. Morgan not to record or share this information with other professionals, explaining that he was concerned that it might affect future insurance claims or lead others to view him as unable to manage independently.

At their final scheduled appointment, Gareth reflected positively on the progress he had made and thanked Dr. Morgan for her support. As a gesture of appreciation, he presented her with a gift hamper containing locally produced food and drink items. He explained that it was important to him to show his gratitude in a meaningful way.

Several days later, Dr. Morgan received an email from Gareth asking whether she would be willing to continue meeting him informally for occasional coffee discussions. In his message, he stated that he was worried about coping without her guidance and felt anxious about losing the support of someone who had become such an important figure in his recovery. He also asked whether she would be prepared to provide personal contact details so that he could get in touch if he experienced difficulties in the future.