

Case Study – Jack

Jack is a 7-year-old male who lives in Llanelli with his parents. He is the only child of two parents who have completed post-graduate education. There is an extended family history of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), mental health concerns as well as academic excellence.

Jack is an intelligent and caring young boy who presents with significant potential to excel academically. In his spare time, Jack enjoys spending time with his friends and participating in physical activities such as swimming, running and skating. He enjoys participating in social events and is often invited to play dates and birthday parties. It is noteworthy that he did not know his address or home phone number, could not print his surname, and recognised only a few pre-primer words.

While Jack interacts well with peers his own age, his parents note that he can be easily led and influenced by others. They also report that Jack gets upset when he does not receive recognition or feels that he has been ignored. His teacher notes that he sometimes acts 'socially immature' and that he often demonstrates attention-seeking behaviour.

Jack describes difficulties with focusing and sitting still in class. He recognises that he is able to 'hyper focus' on some activities of interest. However, he often has difficulty sustaining his attention at school. His parents and teacher indicate that Jack is restless and often requires reminders to help him stay on task. He is described as "constantly running around" and presenting with difficulties listening and following instructions. Jack's teacher indicates that he often blurts out answers and interrupts other students in the classroom. Jack recognises this tendency in himself but says that he 'can't stop' in spite of his best intentions.

Jack has always had challenges falling asleep and sometimes finds that he wakes up in the middle of the night. When he wakes up, he finds that he has a difficult time getting back to sleep - sometimes staying awake for as long as an hour and a half.

His mother reports difficulties at home with following routines and remembering instructions. His parents describe emotional reactivity as well as confrontational behaviours demonstrated both at home and at school. His teacher notes that Jack is very defiant towards listening to instructions, but generally interacts well with his peers. He is easily frustrated and emotionally impulsive - Jack has had several incidents of hitting, crying outbursts, and inappropriate behaviour. Behavioural concerns with aggression, lying, arguments, and disruptive behaviour were noted in pre-school program at age 4.

Case Study – Nancy

Nancy is a 13-year-old girl currently living at home in Carmarthen with her two parents and older sister. She was referred to Springboard Clinic for an evaluation to understand further her focusing concerns and her current learning profile of strengths and concerns.

Nancy reports that she enjoys arts and crafts and participating in social media websites such as "Tumblr." At times, she experiences mood fluctuations and irritability; she noted that anger and frustration tend to be connected with her sadness. Drawing, listening to music, and swimming help her to relax.

Since first entering school, Nancy has experienced difficulties with schoolwork completion, inattentiveness and distractibility, disorganisation, impulsivity and mood fluctuations. Nancy's teachers describe her as a hard-working, cooperative student, but they indicate that homework responsibilities have been an issue. They also note that she is a very reluctant reader, consistently scoring below average on reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. Psychoeducational testing indicated average cognitive abilities.

Nancy states that she is struggling to meet expectations at home and at school, complete academic work, and communicate effectively with others who do not share her interests. Nancy indicates that she often becomes anxious when she is asked to speak in public, or to spend time with people she does not know. Her parents note that Nancy has difficulties making new friends and taking risks - she "longs to get invited, but won't make the first move." She experiences ongoing sleep difficulties, primarily with settling into routines at night.

Her parents report increased anxiety around school participation this year. Nancy reports feeling nervous when going to school because of presentations and homework. She describes hating school and experiencing difficulties completing her work on time because "she can never focus." Her parents note concerns with negative body image and self-talk.

Her older sister has been identified as "gifted" and appears to be highly academically motivated and almost "driven" to excel in all her life domains. (She later was diagnosed with a serious eating disorder). Both her parents are university graduates. Her father is a hard-working financier who stays fit, running marathons. Nancy's mother is currently a full-time homemaker.

There is an extended family history of alcoholism, marital relationship instability and possible ADHD / LD characteristics.

Case Study – Brian

Brian is a bright and articulate 19-year-old student who is currently in his second year of university. He lives in an apartment with two other young men of a similar age, with whom he is good friends. He was referred to the clinic by his parents, who sought to understand his attention profile and learning challenges better.

Brian has spent the last two summers working as a camp counsellor, where he describes being well-liked by his peers and campers. He notes that he has recently been experiencing anger outbursts with his girlfriend, who he has been seeing for the past year. While they have many common interests, he finds that he sometimes lashes out at her when feeling frustrated.

He is challenged by low motivation and is struggling with perceived academic underachievement. Brian is creative and intelligent but has been disappointed by his academic performance in the last year. Last semester, he was placed on academic probation - this was a large motivator for him coming into the clinic. Brian reports a tendency to "shut down" when he becomes overwhelmed by stress. He attributes this tendency as the reason he performed poorly on his last set of exams and why he was placed on academic probation.

There is evidence of escalating behavioural challenges since Grade 9. Brian also reports that he struggles with feelings of internal restlessness, an inconsistent ability to concentrate, and difficulty with time management. He indicates that he has always had a difficult time concentrating in class and that his mind has a tendency to wander. He states that, at times, his immediate reaction to anger and frustration is to become verbally defensive and irritable. He sometimes breaks things if he is really angry or gets into arguments with his girlfriend.

Brian admits to having a daily dependence on marijuana. He states that this smoking helps to "calm" his mind and to decrease the perceived "non-stop" restlessness of his thoughts. While he has been trying to cut back on his marijuana usage, he smokes half a pack of cigarettes per day, and reports some concern that he has begun replacing marijuana with alcohol use. "Binge" drinking with friends is increasing.

His parents are concerned, especially when he had previously been successful academically and socially in secondary school while living at home.