



Case of Robert

CONDUCT DISORDER

Prior to the initial diagnostic evaluation, Robert had been suspended from school on four occasions due to behavioral misconduct and had been caught stealing an expensive portable compact disc player from his grandmother. Although this specific incident of theft prompted Ms. Johnson to seek mental health treatment for her grandson, she had observed over the prior months that Robert had begun to lie to her frequently and to display a negative, callous, and “hard” attitude toward others. Robert acknowledged the validity of his grandmother’s concerns and, during the individual interview portion of the evaluation, reported a more elaborated recent history of engagement in aggressive and antisocial behavior, including unprovoked aggression (i.e., “jumping” peers on the street with his currently incarcerated older brother, Jake) and shoplifting (also with his older brother). The persistence and intensity of Robert’s conduct problems, and the extent to which he expressed a fondness for and identification with his delinquent older brother, were of serious concern. Along with the primary diagnosis of CD, Robert

carried a preexisting diagnosis of ADHD for which he had been receiving pharmacotherapy through his pediatrician. Robert had experienced a fairly extensive social history of family conflict, traumatic loss, and early deprivation. He was removed from his mother’s custody at 18 months due to neglectful conditions accruing from his mother’s substance abuse and had endured the murders of his father and uncle. At age 5, Robert was exhibiting very high levels of verbal and physical aggression in his kindergarten classroom, in addition to hyperactive behaviors, and consequently during that year was seen for 20 sessions of psychotherapy and psychiatric consultation in our clinic. Unchecked, it was quite likely that Robert’s behavior would progress to far more serious manifestations, with significantly more deleterious consequences.

Source: Paul Boxer & Paul Flick. (2008). Treating Conduct Problems, Aggression, and Antisocial Behavior in Children and Adolescents: An Integrated View. In Ric Steele, T. David Elkin, & Michael C. Roberts (Eds.), *Handbook of evidence-based therapies for children and adolescents*. New York: Springer.