



Case of Adam Caldwell

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

Adam Caldwell is a 50-year-old European American. He came to the clinic to seek treatment to address his GAD symptoms. At the onset of therapy, he was also experiencing marital difficulties and stress at work. He had previously been divorced and was remarried, living with his second wife at the time of treatment. He had several children from his first marriage as well as several stepchildren. He had a doctoral degree and was employed in an applied science field.

Adam Caldwell defined himself as a man with integrity (trustworthy, honest) and deep commitment to his religion and the contract of marriage. In terms of coping style, he revealed himself to be a logical and analytical thinker, frequently providing detailed and intellectual responses and at first rarely expressing emotions even when directly prompted. His problem-solving style was such that in stressful situations he reportedly tended to deny (“stuff away”) his painful feelings and act in a manner that was impulsive and hostile.

At the beginning of therapy, Adam reported a high level of GAD symptoms. These symptoms included worry and somatic distress across a broad range of situations. He reported that he was also experiencing stress at work and was having marital conflict.

Adam reported a difficult interpersonal history. His father was authoritarian, distant, and physically

abusive. His mother was kind but submissive to his father and did not protect him from the father’s abuse. He reported being a rebellious child who had no close friends. His divorce from his first wife was traumatic, and his children were removed from his care.

Early in treatment, Adam had difficulty implementing and benefiting from techniques prescribed in the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) protocol in response to the stressful events. At the end of a guided relaxation exercise in Session 4, however, the client reported a substantial reduction in anxiety and stated to the therapist, “That’s the impact you have on me.” In Session 5, Adam reported having experienced a shift in his average mood from anxious to relaxed. He also stated that he was able to make this shift by monitoring his anxiety during the day and challenging the associated thoughts. As therapy progressed, Adam appeared to become confident, forthright, active, and even happy.

Based on Louis Castonguay, Dana Nelson, James Boswell, Samuel Nordberg, Andrew McAleavey, Michelle Newman, and Thomas Borkovec. (2012). *Corrective Experiences in Cognitive Behavior and Interpersonal–Emotional Processing Therapies: A Qualitative Analysis of a Single Case*. In Louis Castonguay and Clara Hill (Eds.), *Transformation in Psychotherapy: Corrective Experiences Across Cognitive Behavioral, Humanistic, and Psychodynamic Approaches* (pp. 245–279). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.