CHAPTER 3
SCHIZOPHRENIA AND OTHER PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS
Case illustration of “Etta”

Introduction to the Video Interview

Schizophrenia

This interview with Etta represents someone who has struggled for years with schizophrenia. Her thought disorder is so profound that Etta could be considered “lower functioning”. As you will see, it was difficult to obtain a clear symptom picture from Etta. Her diagnosis is “Schizophrenia, Undifferentiated Type.” Notice her involuntary hand movements that are a side effect of years of taking psychotropic medication.

Schizophrenia

The symptoms of schizophrenia are:

- Bizarre delusions;
- Hallucinations;
- Disorganized speech and behavior
- Flat or very inappropriate affect;
- Markedly impaired social and occupational functioning;
- Confused sense of self;
- Limited insight;
- Dependence conflicts;
- Loose associations;
- Concrete thinking;
- Physical awkwardness;
- Psychomotor disturbances;
- Dysphoric mood.

Interview Questions:

1. Evaluate Etta’s response to the question, “What went on that you came into the hospital?” by looking for symptoms that would support a diagnosis of schizophrenia? At what point in the interview will you begin to consider this diagnosis?
2. Evaluate Etta’s response to the practitioner when he asks, “Do you think Jesus answers just anybody’s request?”

3. Attempts are made to explore Etta’s mood by asking, “Could you tell me what’s your mood been like?” Describe Etta’s mood as best you can in this interview. Speculate about the extent that Etta is aware of her own mood.

**Practitioner Reflections:**


1. The competency-based assessment focuses on strengths and coping capacities in the client’s environment. Describe the interactions of the biological, psychological and social factors in Etta’s life. When formulating your assessment, what areas of competence did she demonstrate in the interview?

   - What internal and external strengths do you see in Etta’s situation?
   - What more would you like to know about Etta’s support system?
   - If you were the social worker assigned to Etta’s case, what steps would you take to assure that her support system stays intact?
   - What would you consider adding to Etta’s support system?

2. Some individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia have successfully used the insanity plea as a legal defense against criminal charges. One example was John Hinckley who attempted to assassinate the former President Ronald Regan. Do you believe such a legal defense is justified or do you think people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, like Etta for example, should be held accountable for their behavior?

3. Looking back on the interview with Etta, in what ways, if any, do you think she poses a risk to herself or to others?

4. Schizophrenia, Undifferentiated Type includes the positive symptoms of schizophrenia, considered as excesses in behavior. Identify the positive symptoms you observed (and did not observe) in the interview with Etta (i.e.: delusions, hallucinations, hostility, disorganized thinking/behavior).

5. Imagine for a moment that you are the social work practitioner assigned to work with Etta. What challenges would you face in building a relationship with her?

6. List the services that you think would be appropriate for Etta.
If you are not familiar with persons who struggle with schizophrenia, interview an agency practitioner who works with this population.
Alternatively, talk with a family member of someone with this diagnosis.