CHAPTER 4
MOOD DISORDERS

Case illustration of “Barbara”

Introduction to the Video Interview

Mood Disorder

This interview with Barbara illustrates someone who struggles with a mood disorder. Her specific diagnosis would be Major Depressive Disorder, Recurrent. Notice how she describes her suicidal thoughts.

Major Depressive Disorder

Evident by the presence of a depressed mood (dysphoria) or loss of enjoyment or interest in almost everything (anhedonia) and at least 4 of the following:

- Weight change (gain or loss);
- Insomnia or hypersomnia;
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation;
- Fatigue or loss of energy;
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness;
- Reduced ability to think or concentrate;
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

Interview Questions:

1. Reflecting back on the interview with Barbara, it becomes evident that her depression is rather severe and has lasted for a long time. The practitioner asks Barbara, “What does depression mean to you?” List examples of how she describes her depressed mood.

2. Persons with major depression often struggle with suicidal thoughts. The practitioner asks Barbara, “Have you thought of killing yourself?”

   - To what extent do you think Barbara may be a danger to herself?
   - What other information would be helpful in determining the risk of suicide?
3. In this interview, Barbara describes when she first noticed her depression. The practitioner asks, “What symptoms do you see?” Based on Barbara’s answer, how would you differentiate among the diagnoses of dysthymia, major depression, and double depression?

Practitioner Reflections:

The video of “Barbara” in the DVD accompanying the book, Psychopathology: A Competency-based Assessment Model for Social Workers, illustrates someone with a diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder.

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 Barbara’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 Barbara’s situation?
∞ What more would you like to know about Barbara’s support system?
∞ If you were the social worker assigned to Barbara’s case, what steps would you take to assure that her support system stays intact?
∞ What would you consider adding to Barbara’s support system?

2. Imagine for a moment that you are the social work practitioner assigned to work with Barbara. One of the risks associated with a diagnosis of major depression is substance use. How would you ask about her substance use history? Write out the specific question or questions that you would ask.

3. In the case illustration of Major Depressive Disorder, the client Barbara seems to engage with the interviewer, especially when describing her symptoms of depression. For someone who is so depressed, she seems somewhat lively at certain points during the interview. However, Barbara comments that she chooses not to answer her phone or to respond when someone knocks on her door --- especially when she does not know who might be trying to reach her. Barbara goes on to state that she is afraid people might ask her to do something and she will be unable to say “no” to them.

∞ What effects can Barbara’s thoughts and behaviors have on how her family and friends interact with her?
∞ How can these interpersonal changes maintain or exacerbate Barbara’s depression?
∞ What challenges can you anticipate when trying to establish an on-going relationship with Barbara?

4. Most of us have been sad or “blue” at some point in our life. Describe how Barbara’s depressed mood is different.