CHAPTER 4
MOOD DISORDERS

Case illustration of “Mary”

Mood Disorder

Mary illustrates someone who struggles with a mood disorder. Her diagnosis would be Bipolar I Disorder. There are two segments of the interview with Mary. One shows a depressed episode and the other, completed a few days later, shows a manic episode. This provides a unique opportunity to observe Mary in both phases of her illness.

Bipolar I Disorder

A diagnosis of “most recent episode manic” notes that the person is currently (or recently) in a manic episode and has previously experienced at least one major depressive episode, manic episode, or mixed episode. Episodes of dysfunctional mood are often separated by periods of relatively normal mood. Note the following:

- The depressive phase closely resembles the depression associated with a Major Depressive Disorder;
- Psychotic thinking is more than likely shown in a manic episode (or found in catatonic features or postpartum onset).

Manic Episode

A period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive or irritable mood lasting at least one week with at least 3 of the following symptoms:

- Grandiosity;
- Reduced need for sleep;
- Increased talkativeness;
- Racing thoughts;
- Distractibility’
- Increased activity;
- Increased pleasure seeking; to a potentially self-destructive extent.

Interview Questions:

Mary shows evidence of delusions in both segments of the interview. Beginning at the point where Mary is non responsive to the interviewer and looks down for a bit, describe Mary’s mood during the first portion of the interview.
1. In the second section of the interview with Mary she displays the manic episode found in Bipolar I Disorder. The practitioner observes, “You were saying something earlier about Jesus Christ and the CIA.” Describe Mary’s response.

2. The practitioner comments, “When we first sat down we asked if you could take your gum out and you had some strong feelings about that.” List as many indicators of Mary’s manic episode that you can observe at this point in the interview.

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

2. Mary shows limited insight and self-awareness about her impact on other people. Reflect on how she describes her husband. Speculate on what it would be like to be Mary’s husband?

3. Mary appears to be a very engaging person, especially in the manic phase of her illness. She is expansive, somewhat irritable (when she refers to beating up her husband), and distractible. This is in sharp contrast to the sad, anxious demeanor shown in the first segment of the interview. However her psychotic features are consistently shown in both phases of her illness. Describe your feelings about developing a working alliance with Mary. What challenges does she present?