

Case Study of Linda

Presenting Problems:

Linda was referred to Children and Youth Services and Probation for continued truancy issues, breaking curfew, runaway behavior and possession of marijuana.

Relevant Information:

Linda is a 16-year-old Caucasian female who resides in the city with her mother, Carol, who is 44 and her sister, Janine, who is 14. Linda has been raised by her single mother all of her life. She has never met her father, and her mother reports that she is not sure who Linda's father is. Janine's father lived with Carol for the first 2 years of Janine's life, left and is presently in and out of prison for drug related charges. Linda has expressed wishing she had known her father.

Linda's mother, Carol, appears to be committed to her daughters. She reports worrying about Linda's behavior and has been willing in the past to cooperate with services. Carol herself drinks alcohol weekly and goes out to bars on Friday and Saturday nights. She works full-time at a local convenience store.

Linda has actually gone to parties with her mother and her mother's adult friends. She reports thinking it is "funny" watching all of these "old people" get drunk and "crazy." She has memories of this from her earliest years.

Linda brags that she has many friends, both boys and girls. She seems to have a "gang" mentality about friendships – loyalty is everything. She has gotten into violent fights with both boys and girls when loyalty is not upheld in her mind. Linda actually witnessed the murder of a 17 year-old friend of hers outside of her home 2 years ago. By her report, she saw one friend get angry at the 17 year-old friend about a drug deal, pull out a revolver and shoot him in the head. She remembers screaming and the police coming. She continues to have nightmares about this. She was summoned to testify at the court hearing and had great anxiety about being targeted for telling the truth at the hearing. She was seeing a counselor at that time and was able to manage her intense anxiety to get through the ordeal. The man who shot her friend corresponds with her from prison. Although the correspondence is appropriate, she reports she "relives" the death each time she gets mail from him.

Linda shares that she has been sexually active since age 12. She confessed to feeling horrified at the number of partners with whom she has slept in 4 years time. She told this evaluator that after weeks of outpatient counseling she made a list with her counselor of the men with whom she slept. She said it totaled 34. Some encounters involved two and three men at a time. She shared that she wasn't sure if she wanted to have sex like that and upon looking back, wonders if she was in fact raped. Many of her sexual partners were over 18. She reports that she does presently have a 17 year-old boy friend and that they have been dating for 7 months. They have been sexually active since they began dating. She reports her mother knows of her sexual activity and demanded Linda begin using birth control. Linda agreed to this and started birth control at age 15.

Case Study of Linda (continued)

Linda reports that she drinks alcohol 1 or 2 times a week with friends. She reports she has always seen alcohol in her house. She took her first drink at age 6 during a party her mother was throwing. She reports that due to work, her mother is not home in the evenings until about 9 p.m., and that she has friends in or goes to the park with them. She reports that most of them are of age to buy alcohol. She also admits to occasional use of marijuana. She reports that in the past she has tried crack and once she tried acid. She reports it was a terrible trip and will not try that again. Linda does smoke cigarettes and has since age 11. Linda notices that she drinks more and seeks out her friends more when she is feeling empty inside. She confides that over the last 6 months she is not as easily entertained by her friends but feels loyal to them and in somewhat of a rut.

Linda reports that as she has gotten older she wonders what life holds for her. She reports that over the last few months she feels like she is trapped and needs to get away. At those times she will leave home for a few days. Her mother reported the first two incidents to the police, because she had no idea where Linda was. The police found her walking down town with friends and took her home. Linda says she explained to her mother her need to get away and now they have worked it out so that Linda need only let her mother know she'll be gone for a few days and that she is safe. Linda reports that she sometimes wishes her mother had more authority in Linda's life. She says they are more like friends than parent/child.

Educational History:

Linda is a sophomore at the city school. She is in regular classes. Her grades are typically A's and B's. She is particularly good at science and history. She reports enjoying school and most of her teachers. She blames her truancy on the fact that when she gets to school and sees her friends, one of them will have a joint or have an exciting idea about what to do instead of school, they'll get to laughing and joking about what they should do for the rest of the day, and usually end up leaving school. She reports her teachers have tried to talk to her about this, telling her how smart she is and how much potential she has. Linda loves hearing these things and when not with her friends, really wants to succeed at school. She has dreams of going to college to be a counselor. But when she is involved with her peers, those dreams seem to be erased from her mind. Her only thought is hanging with her friends, doing high risk activities. The riskier, the better.

Medical History:

Linda has an unremarkable medical history. She is presently on birth control (Norplant) at her mother's insistence. Two years ago, she contracted a sexually transmitted disease (VD). Since that time, Linda insists she makes her partner use a condom when having intercourse.