

DAP CASE STUDY 2

OVERVIEW

Louise (not their real name) was referred for a DAPP Intervention by children's social services after reports of a number of domestic abuse incidents by her wife. They have a young baby who was placed on a Child Protection Order following a serious incident perpetrated by Louise. Louise stated that she was willing to accept support as she did not want her marriage to end and wanted to make changes for their child. Louise appeared remorseful about what had happened and wanted to make positive behaviour changes, so her marriage did not break down. During the initial assessment, Louise identified that she does not deal well with her emotions. She disclosed that she had witnessed DA as a child and only remembers the negative experiences from her childhood. She said that she learnt to block out experiences and events and that her projected emotion became anger towards others. She recognised that this occurred within her relationship.

Louise's attitude to the programme was positive throughout, she engaged in every session and was open to reflecting on her behaviour towards her wife during their relationship. Once the therapeutic relationship became established, Louise was more forthcoming and open about her experiences and how she felt about them. For example she stated "My nan had a stroke a few weeks ago, she had onset dementia, I've been burying my head in the sand with the situation, I'm hurt and upset about it, I haven't spent as much time with her [her wife], I find it difficult accepting she is unwell, the fact it has gotten this bad".

Louise reported difficulties with managing her emotions, effectively communicating how she feels, and identifying emotional triggers. We worked collaboratively to explore strategies she could use if conflicts arose in the future. A range of concepts and skills were introduced, with a focus on her thoughts and feelings, using a non-judgmental and exploratory approach. This supported Louise to identify her emotions, recognise how they present in her body, and become aware of unhelpful negative thoughts that may impact her responses. Louise was introduced to skills including Time Out, grounding in the "here and now," and challenging and changing negative thinking. At times, Louise reported that she had utilised the skills from the programme to improve her emotional regulation and manage conflict with her partner.

Louise was open about her child experiences and how she felt this has impacted how she manages situations, her beliefs, co-dependency and attachment style. Whilst discussing these experiences, I recognised that Louise had very strong views and expectations about her relationship, so I demonstrated empathy and active listening, which allowed Louise to be more comfortable and open. During check in, Louise stated "I'm] Feeling good, calm and positive, doing things for myself, thinking about my feelings, spending more time with friends. It is making me think about why I am like this, behaving like this, discussing anxious attachment, controlling behaviours, and co-dependency. I have not got rid of the anxious attachments but I'm shifting away from it".

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SOLUTION

During session 8 Louise stated "Things between me and [her partner] are getting better, our communication is getting better, we are talking about things that would previously go into a conflict, we will agree to disagree... I'm not just thinking about myself anymore, I'm thinking about how she is feeling or... what would someone else think". This suggests that Louise has an increased capacity for perspective-taking in her interactions with her partner, reflecting a developing insight into her emotional responses within communication. She has also shown progress in managing cognitive rigidity by acknowledging and accepting different viewpoints.

In session 4 Louise reflected "we [her and her partner] sat down and talked through things, things could have been triggering but it was absolutely fine, for me, thinking about what I actually want to say instead of what is in my head, I spent a lot of time explaining about my emotions". Here, Louise demonstrated the use of assertive communication, effective emotional regulation in response to internal triggers, and negotiation skills to enhance her communication with her partner and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

Whilst Louise evidenced some positive behavioural change, there were areas in which she continued to experience difficulty. For example, in Session 5, when looking at Rumination, Louise stated "I do ruminate a lot about my relationship, because she wasn't saying yes, I would ruminate as I need reassurance". This suggests that when Louise doesn't receive reassurance of the desired response from her partner, she then experiences repetitive negative thinking and a heightened sense of lacking control within the relationship.

In session 8 when looking at attachment styles and how this is displayed in her relationship, Louise stated "I need constant reassurance, I have a fear of abandonment, [I am] dependent for my self-worth. I do have a hard time trusting people. Since being separated I have lost a bit of trust". Louise, expressed ongoing difficulties related to her attachment style within her relationship, which manifests as a heightened need for reassurance from her partner. Although she has begun incorporating self-care practices into her routine, she continues to demonstrate dependence on her partner for validation and self-worth, often accompanied by irrational thought patterns. Moreover, whilst Louise, reported an increased openness in communicating her emotions with her partner; it appears she tends to overshare her feelings as a means of seeking reassurance rather than fostering balanced emotional expression.

In summary, Louise, described situations in which she appeared to apply the skills and strategies from the programme in an effort to make positive behavioural changes. However, upon completion of the programme, it was felt that there were still areas in which Louise, would benefit from further development, including the points outlined above. Consequently, Louise's completion report identified clear objectives for her to work toward, aimed at supporting the development of healthier relationships.