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CONFIDENTIAL EVALUATION SUMMARY

Child's Name: Joe Smith (Not His Real Name)
Grade/School: 7; Dual Enrollment

Date of Birth: XX/XX/20XX
Date of Feedback: XX/XX/2019

Joe is a creative, empathetic 13 year-old boy with a longstanding history of anxiety. He has been previously identified as cognitively advanced and diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Joe participates in individual therapy with a local therapist. His medication is managed by his psychiatrist. Although these supports have been helpful, Joe continues to experience emotional dysregulation. His parents reported, "his mood and the situation seem to dictate his behavior." In the public school setting last year, Joe did well academically, but he seemed "anxious and tense much of the time." He also struggled with peer relationships with non-preferred classmates, and with work completion for non-preferred tasks. His teacher reported while he is "highly intelligent" he often avoided behaviors through "stall tactics and odd behaviors that distracted the class." The academic plan for the coming year is homeschooling, with partial attendance at his local public middle school. Joe participated in this evaluation to provide more information about his profile to assist with treatment planning.

Primary Diagnoses:

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Additional Considerations:

- Cognitively advanced, particularly within the verbal domain
- Attention and executive functioning difficulties, likely secondary to anxiety and depression
- Reduced coping skills and resiliency

Cognitive and Academic Test Results:

- Joe's most notable strengths are in the verbal domain, where he consistently performs well above average for his age. Joe's verbal problem-solving skills, language development, verbal memory, reading, and writing skills were all in the superior range for his age (91st to 98th percentile). He is clearly a **verbal learner** who best takes in new information through listening, talking, reading, or writing about a subject.
- Joe's nonverbal skills are solidly in the average range. His nonverbal problem-solving, visual memory, fine-motor speed, visual perception, and visual-motor integration skills are all developing appropriately for his age. He also has average social perception skills and memory for social info. His math skills are high average for his grade level.
- While there are no concerns about Joe's nonverbal skills based on these test results, his profile of considerable verbal strengths and more typically developing nonverbal skills is notable. As a learner with a strong preference for verbal tasks, Joe may also prefer tasks that are familiar, logical, structured, and well-organized. Joe may be less oriented towards tasks that are unfamiliar, ambiguous, unstructured, open-ended, or highly subjective.
- Joe's attention and executive functioning skills are variable based on his formal testing results. He performed in the average range on tests of his short-term memory, processing speed, and planning. However, he struggled on tests of his attention, impulse control, and verbal fluency (that is, ability to generate ideas under time pressures). Parent ratings showed significant difficulties with emotional control, inhibition, organization, and transitioning.

Emotional/Behavioral Test Results

- Parent ratings on standardized questionnaires showed Joe is experiencing more challenges with depression, aggression, and a tendency to withdraw from difficult or challenging situations. Their ratings show he has more difficulties in these areas than about 95-99% of boys his age.
- On self-report questionnaires, Joe reported more symptoms of anxiety and depression than most boys his age. In particular, he reported generalized worrying, obsessive rumination, feelings of panic when overwhelmed, lowered

self-esteem, and interpersonal difficulties. He also reported feelings of ineffectiveness, as if he is not sure he can cope with the challenges that come his way.

- On projective storytelling tasks, Joe's stories were rich, detailed, and imaginative. He used a strong emotional vocabulary. However, his characters had relatively few coping skills available to them to handle problems. The characteristic coping skills his characters used were: stalling for time, hoping things would 'magically' get solved, and waiting for an adult to help. If these strategies did not work, his characters would either feign illness or exaggerate the problem to obtain more nurturance from adults, or become extremely aggressive. When Joe's characters had to resort to the latter two strategies, they expressed being frightened by their own lack of control of their emotions and ashamed they were not better able to cope with the problem.

Recommendations:

Medical

1. Joe's family is encouraged to share the results of this evaluation with his treatment team. Continued consultation with his psychiatrist regarding medication management of his emotional well-being is strongly recommended. At this time, his test results show ongoing, clinically significant challenges with mood, anxiety, and attention/executive functioning on his current medication. Some students with this profile develop a more episodic mood disorder, so monitoring for this possibility is also warranted.
2. Supporting Joe's physical health and self-regulation through good sleep and nutrition, regular exercise, and regular access to natural light are all recommended given research showing that these factors strongly influence emotional well-being.

Therapeutic

3. Ongoing participation in individual therapy is strongly recommended as well. At this time, Joe's most pressing therapeutic need appears to be the development of more adaptive coping skills that help him feel calm and confident when faced with challenges. This will also allow Joe to view himself as resilient, capable, less vulnerable to shame, and more in control of his emotional and behavioral responses to situations.
4. Joe's therapy should continue to include a family component, especially since he will also be educated primarily at home for the coming year. He appears to be developing patterns of avoidance of difficult activities, situations, or interpersonal interactions (e.g., passive avoidance, aggressive refusal, odd behavior to distract, stalling-type behavior, exaggerating his distress, etc). As Joe is a bright and unique young man with much to offer, it will be essential to ensure these patterns do not become inflexible as he matures. The goal is to ensure Joe sees himself as capable of doing hard things with resiliency and the ability to get back up after a failure or setback. Books such as *Mindset* by Carol Dweck or *The Optimistic Child* by Martin Seligman may be helpful in promoting his resilience.

Educational

5. Joe's educational programming requires thoughtful consideration given his unique needs. There are both advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling. For example, in a homeschool setting, Joe can work at his own pace and explore his interests deeply. He is also bright and making excellent academic progress, and therefore doesn't need the type of specialized learning instruction typically best delivered by a special education teacher. However, attendance at a traditional school setting may help promote Joe's flexibility and resilience, through helping him learn to get along with others who are different from him and teaching him the value of doing things he isn't interested in or doesn't want to do. As Joe is bright and will learn and thrive no matter academic setting he is in, learning these essential life skills will open up more options for him in terms of college and a future career. At this time, a hybrid option that balances the advantages of both options may be most appropriate for his needs. However, I would recommend that his treatment team work carefully with his family to ensure that the goals of improving his resilience and decreasing avoidance remain in the forefront during his middle and high school years.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me at (360) 334-6156.



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