

Deciphering the Anxious and Alcoholic Behavior of Finn Labrant

Case Description

When first meeting Finn Labrant, one would say he is a shy, quiet individual who often stays to himself. With many attempts of trying to find common interests with his classmates, Finn often comes off as a socially awkward individual who is ultimately left to himself. When Finn was in the fifth grade he was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder which was treated by providing him with a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI). He blames most of his awkwardness and inability to connect with his fellow peers on his diagnosis. After graduating high school and getting ready to move into the dorms at Chatham University for his freshman year of college, Finn wants to make a change. He no longer wants to be the guy who has no similar interest with his peers. Longing to fit in, Finn decides to try out for the baseball team at Chatham University. After undergoing many pre-tryout practices and tryouts, Finn makes the team! This is the turning point for Finn, or at least what he thought. At the beginning of the school year, Finn found himself still struggling to connect with the other baseball players. He would go hangout at the local pub with the team, but wouldn't say much and when he did speak, he often said things that others couldn't relate to and was often overlooked. As Finn felt more and more pressure to fit in, the more anxiety he had. One Friday night at a party, Finn sees the baseball team drinking alcohol. He did not think this was a good idea because most of the team was underage, but his teammates kept peer pressuring him into having a drink. Finally, Finn gave in. He thought to himself, "One drink is not going to kill me". As the semester goes on and the more parties Finn attends the more alcohol he consumes. Alcohol made Finn feel less anxious. It made him feel good and relaxed and he was able to carry out conversations with his teammates. When he realized this, he became a heavy drinker to the point of hiding empty alcohol bottles in

stuck to past tense for past events

awkward sentence

Break into 2 or 3 paragraphs

his dorm room. Soon, he could not make it through his morning without a drink, with another two drinks at lunch, and so many more drinks that he loses count before dinner and eventually blacks out every night.

Thesis: "This paper examines..."

Humanistic and Existential Perspective

Finn encounters several humanistic and existential challenges. The first challenge would be being "stuck" in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and not exceeding to the top level of transcendence. Finn cannot surpass his belongingness and love needs due to his inability to feel connected with anyone in his life. In high school, he never found his place and now in college, he doesn't fit in with his peers until he is consuming alcohol, but even when he drinks alcohol and feels somewhat of a connection with his peers, he can never surpass his esteem needs. Finn doesn't have a best friend, but all of his life he has tried to achieve one and continuously feels left down by himself. Another challenge is striving for identity and relationship to others. Finn does not know who he truly is. He has never took the time to ponder on what makes Finn, Finn. He was too busy trying to fit in with his peers around him that he did not take time to think about what made him the happiest. All he has ever known about himself is that he is constantly trying to get on the good side with his peers and this is what drove him to alcoholism. He strives to contain relationships with others so badly that he puts his health at risk. He knows that the only way he will be able to have a conversation with his peers is if he has alcohol in his system so this is what he will do in order to achieve a sense of belonging.

Alcoholism goes hand in hand with Finn's struggle for meaning. He knows that when he does not drink that he is too anxious and unable to make a conversation that will last with his peers. He often thinks that that is his purpose, to drink to the point where he blacks out. Consuming alcohol became Finn's purpose due to it being the only thing that helps him build

relationships and it takes away his anxiety. Finn deals with anxiety as a condition of life, but not normal anxiety. He has existential anxiety where he takes his inability to fit in with his peers to motivate and push himself into fitting in. Finn's way of pushing himself is to drink alcohol, this is not the best way to handle his situation, but he could see his anxiety diminishing when he did drink alcohol and felt as if he was growing as a person. He felt he was growing because he was then able to talk to his peers and feel no pressure about saying the wrong things.

Behavioral Perspective

Both anxiety and alcoholism can be associated with the behavioral perspective in many ways. Finn's environment plays a huge role in his alcoholism habits. His environment is the dorm rooms at Chatham University, the baseball field, and the numerous parties he attends. All three of the locations he feels the pressure to fit in with his friends. In college, almost everyone consumes alcohol and Finn is surrounded by this environment 24/7. He attends at least three parties throughout the weekend and sometimes a lot more as he hops from one party to the next in the same night. Within this environment, he sees all of his peers drinking and having a good time. He knows that he wants to have a good time and fit in, so he tries a drink. After his first drink he feels great with no anxiety symptoms. This reaction and environment now motivates him to continue to drink.

Operant conditioning is the next role that encourages Finn's alcoholism and anxiety. B.F. Skinner has claimed that satisfying consequences will strengthen behavior, just as dissatisfying consequences will weaken behavior. In Finn's case, consuming alcohol has had satisfying consequences. When he drinks his anxiety vanishes and he is able to fit in with his peers. This is what Finn had longed for and now that he sees a solution that has helped him, his behavior will continue to strengthen. His alcoholism is based on negative reinforcement. When Finn drinks, his

Good

anxiety goes away. He uses alcohol to escape his feelings of anxiety in order to talk to his peers. When he is able to talk to his peers he is able to fit in. Finn is set on a continuous reinforcement schedule. Every time he drinks alcohol, he gets the negative reinforcement of his anxiety vanishing. Within the role of operant conditioning, it is known that Finn's behavior is voluntary and active within his environment.

Psychoanalytic Perspective

The psychoanalytic perspective evaluates Finn's alcoholism and anxiety throughout three different ways. Sigmund Freud claims that the importance of one's childhood, the role of the unconscious, and the role of defense mechanisms provide an understanding on one's personality. Finn's ^{strongest} mind structure is in the ID. His thoughts about decreasing his anxiety and fitting in with his peers by consuming alcohol are illogical, irrational, and emotional. There are many other solutions to these obstacles in his life, but he is driven by his pleasure principle. He gets pleasure when he fits in with his peers and when his anxiety is diminished. When he feels this pleasure, he continues with this type of thought process. With the ID, Freud would suggest that Finn was also deprived of the oral stage of his pleasure seeking drives. This explains why he has to always be consuming alcohol and putting alcohol into his mouth. A defense mechanism that Finn uses quite a lot is repression. When consuming alcohol Finn's anxiety disappears as he banishes all of his threatening thoughts, feelings, and memories to his unconscious. Finn does not want to come to terms with his anxiety. He wants to forget about how his anxiety makes him feel and be able to fit in with his peers. He is able to do this with the help of alcohol.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the three perspectives: humanistic and existential, behavioral, and psychoanalytic all give separate inputs into Finn Labrant's personality. Along with all three

inputs are suggestions to changing these behaviors. The humanistic and existential approach suggest person-centered therapy and positive psychology. With person-centered therapy the purpose is to facilitate self-actualization and transcendence. Finn could attend therapy where he works on getting himself to those needs while having the help of a therapist who uses reflection and has unconditional positive regard towards him. While using positive psychology, Finn could do certain activities such as: keeping a gratitude journal, writing for two minutes about a positive experience within the last 24 hours, exercising, mediating, and/ or doing one act of kindness.

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This is a better way to cope and decrease his anxiety instead of consuming alcohol. The behavioral approach suggests using new techniques such as: exposure, aversion therapy, shaping, and applied behavior analysis. If Finn uses these techniques, he could potentially reduce his use

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of alcohol and cope with his anxiety in a healthy way. The psychoanalytic approach suggests hypnosis, free association, and dream work. While using these techniques Finn could potentially find out all of his unconscious thoughts. After he has an understanding these thoughts, he could take steps towards fixing his alcoholism and anxiety. Overall, Finn can have a good understanding of his personality through these three perspectives and can potentially fix his behaviors with the suggested therapies and activities.