# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Ava Moskowitz’s Therapy Session on May 8, 2025

## Subjective

Ava presented to the in-person session on May 8, 2025, initially expressing relief and a hint of playful exasperation about making it to the appointment, joking about the therapist thinking she had “ghosted” him. She quickly transitioned to discussing recent significant family and social stressors. A primary focus was her return home from college on Friday night and the immediate, unexpected encounters with her parents’ new partners. Her father had called her on Thursday to ask if his girlfriend, Kim, could be present when he picked her up from the airport. Ava felt she “couldn’t say no” despite her internal reluctance. This was compounded by flight delays, which left her “pissed off” upon arrival, and then having to engage with Kim in the car for 45 minutes when she just wanted to be left alone. She stated, “I want nothing to do with nobody, because I was pissed off. All I wanted to do was be home, leave me alone.”

Later that same evening, upon returning from seeing friends, she discovered her mother’s boyfriend, Chris, at their house, an encounter she also did not want. She expressed frustration at meeting both new partners on her first day back, saying, “I didn’t want to meet any of them… I met two of them in one day. It’s not fair. That’s not the first day I’m home.” She acknowledged her dad at least asked, whereas her mom did not, and her mom’s justification was “well, it was gonna happen eventually.” Ava described her interaction with Chris as minimal, giving him a quick “side hug” and then retreating to her room, stating she was tired.

Ava also discussed her awareness of her mother’s previous relationships, stating, “I know, like all of the previous men, too… she doesn’t think I know, but I do.” She asserted her ability to find things out, telling her mother, “you can’t hide anything for me. Like, I will always find out.” This led to a brief discussion about her brother, Ian, who recently graduated, and his tendency to be an “avoider,” a trait Ava admitted she sometimes shares: “It runs in the family, like I am a big avoider too… I can appreciate that.”

A significant portion of the session was dedicated to discussing her complex and currently strained relationship with her friend, Zoe. Ava recounted a recent incident where Zoe’s grandfather was dying. Alex, a mutual friend, informed Ava. Ava admitted her initial spoken response to Alex was “bitchy” and “annoying,” for which Alex called her out as “really fucking rude.” Ava, flustered, pretended to have bad service and called Alex back from her dorm, then feigning appropriate concern. Days later, Alex casually mentioned Zoe’s grandfather had passed, and he had forgotten to tell Ava. Ava felt this was insensitive and was conflicted about how to respond to Zoe, especially since Zoe had only sent an Instagram DM when Ava’s own grandfather passed. After consulting a friend, Ava texted Zoe a message of condolence. Zoe’s reply was brief: “I’m good, but thank you so so much.” Ava found this response dismissive and uncharacteristic of their past closeness, noting it was their first interaction in about three to four months (since January/February). She stated, “that’s how she would text, like a girl that she hasn’t spoken to since, like, fifth grade.”

Ava then shared deeply emotional past communications from Zoe, including a long, heartfelt birthday message from September and a yearbook message from August 2024, which expressed profound gratitude, love, and the significant positive impact Ava had on Zoe’s life. Zoe had written phrases like, “I genuinely don’t think I could have survived this roller coaster of a year without you,” “you single handedly changed my entire life and my perspective on so many things,” and “You show me exactly who I am.” Ava expressed confusion and pain at the drastic shift from this deep connection to the current ghosting, stating, “how do you get a text like that of your birthday, and then a few months later, completely cut them out… I just I don’t get it. I’m confused.” She wondered if someone had said something negative about her to Zoe, but the therapist suggested Zoe knows her too well for that to be the cause. Ava expressed a fear that Zoe, who now has a boyfriend, might be avoiding the depth of their past connection because she missed what they had and is scared of losing it again, or that Ava holds up a “mirror of authenticity” that Zoe finds difficult to face.

Ava is anticipating an upcoming “bed party” (a pre-college celebration) for their mutual friend Sammy in June, which Zoe will also attend. This will be their first in-person encounter since the distancing. Ava is anxious about this, unsure how Zoe will act or how she herself should react, whether Zoe will approach her or avoid her. She expressed a desire to avoid Zoe if Zoe avoids her but also acknowledged her close friendship with Sammy would require her presence. She is struggling with how to navigate this potential interaction, stating, “I just don’t really know what to do with that.”

On a more positive note, Ava mentioned she started working for Instacart and made $200 in three days, finding it easy and a good way to get out of the house. She also plans to work at a day camp starting in late June.

Significant quotes: \* On meeting her parents’ new partners: “I didn’t want to meet any of them… I met two of them in one day. It’s not fair. That’s not the first day I’m home.” \* On her initial reaction to Zoe’s grandfather dying (to Alex): “I had like, I was like, Are you kidding? Like, that’s so and I said, That’s so annoying.” \* Zoe’s text response after her grandfather’s death: “I’m good, but thank you so so much.” \* On Zoe’s past messages vs. current behavior: “how do you get a text like that of your birthday, and then a few months later, completely cut them out… I just I don’t get it. I’m confused.” \* On her fear about Zoe’s avoidance: “I think for her, I think it’s more of the fact that she like, like, I think she, like, missed what we had. And I think, like, She’s scared of losing it again.” \* On the upcoming bed party: “I just don’t really know what to do with that… I feel like it’s gonna be awkward.”

## Objective

Ava presented as well-groomed and casually dressed for the in-person session. Her mood initially appeared somewhat stressed but quickly lightened with playful banter. Throughout the session, she was highly articulate, expressive, and engaged. Her affect was generally congruent with the content discussed, displaying a range of emotions including frustration and annoyance (discussing flight delays and forced introductions to parents’ partners), hurt and confusion (discussing Zoe’s behavior), anxiety (anticipating the bed party), and moments of humor and pride (discussing Instacart earnings and her ability to uncover information).

When discussing the unexpected introductions to her parents’ new partners, Ava’s tone was irritable, and her body language (slight frown, faster speech pace) suggested genuine displeasure and a feeling of her boundaries being crossed. When recounting the complex situation with Zoe, Ava’s demeanor shifted to one of pronounced vulnerability. Her voice softened, her eye contact occasionally wavered, and she appeared to be genuinely grappling with feelings of hurt, bewilderment, and sadness. She shared screenshots of past messages from Zoe, her actions indicating the significance of these past interactions and her current distress over the change in their relationship. There were moments where she seemed to be holding back stronger emotions when reflecting on the depth of their prior connection versus the current distance.

Ava demonstrated good insight into her own feelings and reactions, such as acknowledging her “bitchy response” regarding Zoe’s grandfather and her tendency to be an “avoider” at times. She was receptive to the therapist’s interpretations and hypotheses, particularly regarding Zoe’s potential motivations (fear of loss, avoidance of authenticity). She actively participated in problem-solving discussions, especially concerning how to approach the upcoming social event with Zoe. When discussing her new Instacart gig, her affect brightened, and she spoke with enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment. No significant psychomotor agitation or retardation was observed. She maintained good rapport with the therapist throughout the session.

## Assessment

Ava is navigating a period of significant interpersonal stress, primarily centered on the abrupt and confusing shift in her close friendship with Zoe, and secondarily on adjusting to new family dynamics involving her parents’ new partners. Her subjective reports of frustration, hurt, and anxiety are well-supported by her objective presentation, including congruent affective displays and thoughtful reflections on her experiences.

The central issue is the perceived ‘ghosting’ by Zoe, which is causing Ava considerable distress given their previously intense and emotionally intimate bond, as evidenced by the shared past communications. Ava’s confusion and hurt appear to stem from the stark contrast between Zoe’s past declarations of deep affection and reliance, and her current distant and dismissive behavior. Ava is struggling to understand this change and is experiencing anticipatory anxiety about their upcoming forced interaction. The therapist’s hypothesis that Zoe may be avoiding Ava due to her own fears (of repeating a painful loss of connection, or of confronting the authenticity Ava represents) resonated with Ava and provides a potential framework for understanding Zoe’s actions, though this remains speculative without Zoe’s perspective.

Ava demonstrates several strengths, including a high degree of self-awareness, articulateness, resilience, and a capacity for insight. She is able to identify her own contributions to difficult interactions (e.g., her initial rude comment to Alex) and is motivated to understand and navigate complex relational dynamics. Her proactive engagement in finding a temporary income source (Instacart) also reflects resourcefulness. However, she also exhibits some vulnerability, including a tendency towards avoidance in certain situations (which she self-identified) and a clear susceptibility to being deeply hurt by perceived rejection or unexplained distancing from significant others. The situation with Zoe appears to be a significant emotional trigger, potentially reactivating past experiences or insecurities related to friendship and loyalty.

Coping mechanisms observed include seeking social support (talking to another friend about Zoe, discussing with therapist), intellectualization (trying to understand Zoe’s motives), and some avoidance (wanting to avoid Zoe at the party if Zoe avoids her). Her decision to text Zoe condolences, despite her own hurt and Zoe’s previous impersonal DM, shows a capacity for mature action even when conflicted. The abrupt introductions to her parents’ partners, while unwelcome, seem to be managed by Ava through temporary disengagement (retreating to her room) and expressing her frustration in therapy, which are reasonable short-term coping strategies.

Clinically, Ava presents with symptoms consistent with an Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood, given the identifiable stressors (relationship conflict with Zoe, family changes) and her resultant emotional distress (hurt, confusion, anxiety, some sadness). There is no indication of a more severe underlying psychopathology at this time. Her primary struggle is relational, focusing on themes of friendship, loyalty, authenticity, and managing abrupt changes in interpersonal dynamics. The intensity of her past bond with Zoe suggests that the current situation is experienced as a significant loss.

## Plan

1. **Continue Therapy:** Ava will continue with weekly in-person therapy sessions to address ongoing interpersonal stressors, process complex emotions related to her friendship with Zoe, and further develop coping strategies. The next session is scheduled for next Thursday.
2. **Addressing Relational Rupture with Zoe & Anticipatory Anxiety:**
   * **Narrative Exploration & ACT for Values:** Continue to explore the narrative of Ava’s friendship with Zoe, focusing on the meaning of the relationship, the impact of the perceived ghosting, and aligning Ava’s responses with her core values regarding friendship and authenticity. Process feelings of hurt, confusion, and loss related to the shift in the dynamic.
   * **DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills:** Focus on preparing for the upcoming “bed party” where Zoe will be present. This will include:
     + Discussing and rehearsing potential communication strategies, including the previously discussed gentle confrontation approach (“Hi, it’s nice to see you. I know that there’s some unfinished business that I would like to address at some point, and it’s nice seeing you here today.”), if Ava feels it aligns with her goals for the interaction.
     + Developing strategies for managing different scenarios (e.g., Zoe avoiding her, Zoe approaching her, Zoe acting as if nothing is wrong).
     + Setting realistic expectations for the interaction and focusing on Ava’s own emotional regulation regardless of Zoe’s behavior.
   * **DBT Distress Tolerance & Emotion Regulation / ACT Defusion:** Equip Ava with skills to manage anxiety leading up to and during the party. This includes mindfulness techniques, distress tolerance skills for intense emotions, and ACT-based defusion techniques to unhook from unhelpful anxious thoughts and predictions.
   * **Analysis of Past Communications:** Review and process the sentiment analysis of Zoe’s past messages (yearbook and birthday text) that Ava was to send to the therapist. This will be used to further explore the previous depth of the connection and Ava’s current interpretation of the change, within an ACT framework of observing thoughts and feelings without over-identification.
3. **Navigating Family Dynamics:**
   * Continue to support Ava in navigating the new family dynamics involving her parents’ new partners.
   * Reinforce boundary-setting skills (DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness) to manage unwanted or uncomfortable interactions, focusing on asserting her needs respectfully.
   * Provide space to process her feelings about these changes in her family structure, utilizing an Existential approach to explore themes of change and adaptation.
4. **Addressing Avoidance Tendencies & Enhancing Coping:**
   * Utilize ACT principles to explore Ava’s self-identified pattern of avoidance. Focus on identifying values-driven actions and taking committed steps towards them, even in the presence of discomfort or anxiety (e.g., regarding the situation with Zoe).
   * Reinforce existing adaptive coping strategies, such as her resourcefulness in starting Instacart work and her engagement in therapy.
5. **Homework/Tasks for Next Session:**
   * Ava to send the screenshots of Zoe’s yearbook and birthday messages to the therapist for the agreed-upon sentiment analysis and further discussion.
   * Practice one mindfulness or anxiety-reduction technique daily in the week leading up to any potential interactions or when feeling overwhelmed by thoughts about Zoe.
   * Reflect on her core values in friendships and what a values-aligned interaction at Sammy’s party might look like for her, regardless of Zoe’s actions.
6. **Referrals:** No referrals are indicated at this time.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

The therapy session with Ava on May 8, 2025, was characterized by several distinct tonal shifts, reflecting the varied and emotionally charged topics she discussed.

1. **Initial Lightness to Irritated Frustration:** The session began with a light, playful tone as Ava joked about potentially “ghosting” the therapist. This quickly shifted to a tone of irritated frustration when she recounted her flight delays and the unwelcome, back-to-back introductions to her parents’ new partners. Her speech became faster, and her words conveyed a sense of her personal space and emotional state being disregarded (“I want nothing to do with nobody,” “It’s not fair”). This tone highlighted her feeling of being overwhelmed and having her boundaries crossed on her first day home.
2. **Assertive Confidence (Regarding Mother):** When discussing her mother’s attempts to hide relationships, Ava’s tone shifted to one of assertive confidence, almost a knowing challenge (“you can’t hide anything for me. Like, I will always find out”). This suggested a dynamic where Ava feels she has an upper hand in terms of awareness within the family, and a certain pride in her ability to uncover truths.
3. **Conflicted Annoyance and Self-Correction (Zoe’s Grandfather News):** Recounting her initial “bitchy” reaction to Alex informing her about Zoe’s grandfather, Ava’s tone was a mix of slight embarrassment and a lingering echo of the annoyance she initially felt. This shifted to a more neutral, factual tone as she described her subsequent, more feigned, appropriate response after Alex called her out. This sequence revealed her awareness of social expectations versus her genuine, sometimes less filtered, reactions.
4. **Hurt, Confusion, and Vulnerability (Discussing Zoe):** The most significant and sustained tonal shift occurred when Ava delved into the details of her strained friendship with Zoe. Her tone became markedly softer, more hesitant, and laden with hurt and confusion. When reading Zoe’s past heartfelt messages, her voice conveyed a deep sense of pain and bewilderment at the current disconnect (“how do you get a text like that… and then a few months later, completely cut them out?”). This vulnerability was palpable and underscored the emotional impact of Zoe’s perceived ghosting.
5. **Anxious Anticipation (Bed Party):** When discussing the upcoming “bed party” and the potential encounter with Zoe, Ava’s tone shifted to one of anxious anticipation and uncertainty (“I just don’t really know what to do with that,” “I feel like it’s gonna be awkward”). This reflected her apprehension about navigating a potentially uncomfortable social situation and the unresolved issues with Zoe.
6. **Pragmatic and Upbeat (Instacart Work):** A brief but noticeable shift to a more pragmatic and upbeat tone occurred when Ava mentioned her new Instacart job. She sounded pleased with her earnings and the ease of the work, indicating a sense of accomplishment and a positive distraction from her interpersonal stressors.
7. **Reflective and Open (Engaging with Therapist’s Interpretations):** Throughout the session, particularly when the therapist offered interpretations (e.g., Zoe’s potential fear of loss or avoidance of authenticity), Ava’s tone was generally reflective and open. She seemed to genuinely consider these perspectives, even if they were painful, indicating good engagement with the therapeutic process.

These tonal shifts provided a rich layer of information, highlighting Ava’s emotional landscape as she navigated complex family and peer relationships, and her internal struggles with hurt, confusion, and anxiety.

### Thematic Analysis

Several major themes emerged during Ava’s therapy session on May 8, 2025, painting a picture of her current relational and emotional challenges:

1. **Relational Rupture and Perceived Betrayal (Friendship with Zoe):** This was the most dominant theme. Ava’s distress over Zoe’s sudden distancing, especially contrasted with Zoe’s past expressions of deep affection and reliance (“you single handedly changed my entire life”), permeated much of the session. Quotes like, “how do you get a text like that of your birthday, and then a few months later, completely cut them out?” and Zoe’s brief, dismissive text (“I’m good, but thank you so so much”) illustrate the profound sense of confusion and hurt Ava is experiencing. This theme connects to Ava’s broader psychological profile by highlighting her valuation of deep, authentic connections and her vulnerability to perceived abandonment or unexplained shifts in important relationships.
2. **Navigating Shifting Family Dynamics and Boundaries:** The unwelcome introductions to her parents’ new partners on her first day home from college was a significant secondary theme. Ava’s statements, “I didn’t want to meet any of them… It’s not fair,” and her feeling that she “couldn’t say no” to her father, underscore her struggle with asserting boundaries in the face of changing family structures. This theme reflects the challenges of young adulthood, where parental relationships evolve, and individuals must renegotiate their roles and expectations. Her mother’s comment, “well, it was gonna happen eventually,” highlights a potential lack of attunement to Ava’s need for adjustment time.
3. **Authenticity vs. Avoidance in Relationships:** This theme was evident in Ava’s reflections on both Zoe and herself. She pondered if Zoe was avoiding her because Ava represents a “mirror of authenticity” that Zoe finds challenging. Simultaneously, Ava acknowledged her own tendency towards avoidance (“It runs in the family, like I am a big avoider too”), suggesting an internal conflict or awareness of this pattern. This theme is crucial to Ava’s self-understanding and her approach to resolving conflicts or navigating uncomfortable emotional truths.
4. **The Pain of Unexplained Social Distancing (Ghosting):** Zoe’s behavior, characterized by a lack of explanation for her withdrawal, is a clear example of ghosting. Ava’s repeated expressions of “I just I don’t get it. I’m confused” highlight the psychological distress caused by this ambiguity. This theme is increasingly relevant in contemporary social dynamics and speaks to the difficulty of coping with unresolved relational endings or shifts where closure is absent.
5. **Anticipatory Anxiety and Social Navigation:** Ava’s anxiety about the upcoming “bed party” and how to interact with Zoe (“I just don’t really know what to do with that”) illustrates the theme of navigating complex social situations with unresolved interpersonal conflict. This is a common experience, but for Ava, it is heightened by the previous depth of her friendship with Zoe and the current uncertainty.

These themes are interconnected, with the core issue of the ruptured friendship with Zoe amplifying Ava’s stress as she also navigates changes within her family. Her reflections on authenticity and avoidance suggest a developing self-awareness that is key to her therapeutic progress.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Ava expressed a mix of sentiments about herself. There was **vulnerability and self-doubt**, particularly in relation to Zoe (“I just I don’t get it. I’m confused,” wondering if she did something wrong). She also acknowledged her own flaws with a degree of **self-awareness**, such as her “bitchy” initial reaction to news about Zoe’s grandfather (“I had like, I was like, Are you kidding? Like, that’s so and I said, That’s so annoying”) and her tendency to be an “avoider.” However, there were also moments of **assertiveness and confidence**, especially when discussing her ability to uncover truths her mother tries to hide (“you can’t hide anything for me. Like, I will always find out”) and a sense of **pride and competence** regarding her Instacart earnings (“I made $200 in three days… It’s so easy”).

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Zoe:** Predominantly **hurt, confusion, and disappointment**. Ava’s repeated questioning of Zoe’s behavior (“how do you get a text like that… and then a few months later, completely cut them out?”) underscores these negative sentiments. There’s also a lingering sense of **betrayal** given the past intimacy. \* **Parents’ New Partners (Kim & Chris):** Primarily **annoyance, frustration, and a feeling of imposition**. Ava expressed clear displeasure at being forced into these interactions on her first day home (“I didn’t want to meet any of them… It’s not fair”). \* **Parents:** Towards her father, there was a sense of **resigned acceptance** of his request but underlying frustration. Towards her mother, there was a mix of **frustration** at her lack of consideration (not asking before Chris was over) and a **knowing, almost superior sentiment** regarding her mother’s attempts to keep secrets. \* **Alex (Mutual Friend):** Initial **annoyance** (her “bitchy” reaction) but also an implicit acknowledgment of his directness in calling her out, leading to her **self-correction**.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Ava’s engagement suggested a **positive sentiment** towards the therapeutic process. She was open, expressive, and receptive to the therapist’s interpretations. Her initial playful comment about “ghosting” the therapist indicated a comfortable and established rapport. She actively used the session to process difficult emotions and explore solutions, implying she finds therapy a **supportive and helpful space**.

**Sentiment Shifts:** The session saw significant sentiment shifts. It began with lightheartedness, quickly moving to **irritation and frustration** (parents’ partners). The longest and most emotionally charged part of the session, discussing Zoe, was dominated by **hurt, confusion, and sadness**. This shifted to **anxiety** when anticipating the future encounter with Zoe. A brief interlude of **positive sentiment (pride, enthusiasm)** emerged when discussing her Instacart work. Her engagement with the therapist’s hypotheses about Zoe brought forth more **reflective and contemplative sentiments**.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor’s) sentimental reactions included empathy for Ava’s palpable hurt and confusion regarding Zoe, and a sense of understanding for her frustration with the boundary issues concerning her parents. There was also a feeling of encouragement seeing her resourcefulness (Instacart) and her capacity for insight. A potential countertransference to be mindful of could be an over-identification with Ava’s feelings of injustice or a desire to “fix” the situation with Zoe, which would not be therapeutic. The focus remained on validating Ava’s experience, exploring her internal reactions, and empowering her to navigate these challenges according to her own values and choices. Maintaining neutrality while offering supportive interpretations was key.

### Key Points

* **Acute Distress from Friendship Rupture:** Ava is experiencing significant emotional distress (hurt, confusion, anxiety) due to the unexplained and abrupt distancing by her close friend, Zoe, which contrasts sharply with Zoe’s past expressions of deep affection and reliance.
  + *Relevance:* This is Ava’s primary concern and a major source of her current emotional imbalance. Addressing this is central to her therapy goals of understanding relational dynamics and managing emotional pain.
* **Navigating Unwanted Family Changes:** Ava is struggling with the unwelcome and poorly timed introductions to her parents’ new romantic partners, feeling her boundaries were crossed and her need for adjustment ignored.
  + *Relevance:* This highlights challenges in navigating evolving family structures and asserting personal boundaries, which are important developmental tasks for young adults.
* **Anticipatory Anxiety Regarding Social Confrontation:** Ava is experiencing significant anxiety about an upcoming social event where she will encounter Zoe for the first time since the distancing, unsure how to act or how Zoe will behave.
  + *Relevance:* This provides a concrete situation for applying coping skills for anxiety, practicing interpersonal effectiveness, and making values-based decisions about social engagement.

### Significant Quotes

* “I didn’t want to meet any of them… I met two of them in one day. It’s not fair. That’s not the first day I’m home.”
  + *Context:* Ava expressing her frustration about being introduced to her father’s girlfriend and her mother’s boyfriend on the same day she returned from college.
  + *Significance:* This quote highlights Ava’s feeling of her personal space and emotional needs being disregarded during a vulnerable time (first day home). It underscores the theme of navigating difficult family dynamics and boundary setting.
* “How do you get a text like that of your birthday, and then a few months later, completely cut them out… I just I don’t get it. I’m confused.”
  + *Context:* Ava reflecting on the stark contrast between a deeply affectionate birthday message from her friend Zoe and Zoe’s current behavior of ghosting her.
  + *Significance:* This powerfully conveys Ava’s bewilderment and hurt. It encapsulates the core of her distress regarding the unexplained rupture in a significant friendship and the pain of perceived betrayal or inexplicable loss of connection.
* Zoe’s past yearbook message: “I genuinely don’t think I could have survived this roller coaster of a year without you… You show me exactly who I am.”
  + *Context:* Ava sharing a past message from Zoe that illustrated the previous depth and intimacy of their friendship.
  + *Significance:* This quote, shared by Ava, is crucial as it provides concrete evidence of the profound bond she believed she had with Zoe. It starkly contrasts with Zoe’s current distancing, thereby intensifying Ava’s confusion and sense of loss, and forms the basis of her current emotional struggle.
* “I think for her, I think it’s more of the fact that she like, like, I think she, like, missed what we had. And I think, like, She’s scared of losing it again.”
  + *Context:* Ava offering her own hypothesis about why Zoe might be avoiding her.
  + *Significance:* This shows Ava’s attempt to make sense of Zoe’s behavior, attributing it to Zoe’s own fears and insecurities rather than a fault in Ava herself. It reflects her capacity for empathy even while hurt, and a desire to understand complex motivations.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Ava Moskowitz attended her in-person therapy session on May 8, 2025, presenting with a mix of initial lightheartedness that quickly gave way to discussions of significant interpersonal stressors. The primary focus of her distress was the abrupt and unexplained distancing from her close friend, Zoe. Ava recounted the stark contrast between Zoe’s past deeply affectionate and reliant messages—such as a heartfelt birthday text and a yearbook entry where Zoe credited Ava with changing her life—and Zoe’s current behavior, which Ava described as “ghosting.” A recent, brief, and dismissive text from Zoe following the death of Zoe’s grandfather further amplified Ava’s confusion and hurt, as it was their first direct communication in months. Ava is now grappling with intense feelings of bewilderment and pain, struggling to understand this drastic shift in their previously intimate friendship.

Compounding this, Ava experienced unwelcome introductions to both her father’s new girlfriend, Kim, and her mother’s new boyfriend, Chris, on the very day she returned home from college. She expressed significant frustration at these encounters, feeling her boundaries were crossed and her need for personal space after a delayed flight was ignored. She noted her father at least asked, while her mother did not, justifying it as an inevitable event.

Ava is also experiencing anticipatory anxiety about an upcoming “bed party” for a mutual friend, which Zoe is expected to attend. This will be their first potential in-person interaction since Zoe began distancing herself, and Ava is unsure how to navigate the situation or how Zoe will react. Throughout the session, Ava demonstrated a high degree of self-awareness, acknowledging her own occasional “bitchy” reactions and her tendency towards avoidance, a trait she sees in her family. She was receptive to the therapist’s interpretations, including the possibility that Zoe’s avoidance might stem from her own fears or insecurities. On a positive note, Ava shared her success with a new Instacart job, which provides a welcome distraction and sense of accomplishment. The session focused on validating Ava’s complex emotions, exploring the dynamics of her friendship with Zoe, strategizing for the upcoming social event, and discussing coping mechanisms for managing family changes and her own relational patterns. Ava was tasked with sending the past messages from Zoe to the therapist for further analysis and to practice mindfulness techniques.

# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Max Hafker’s Therapy Session on May 8, 2025

## Subjective

Max arrived for his in-person session on May 8, 2025, initially commenting on the difficulty of the parking lot, a sentiment he noted was shared by another client (Ava). He appeared in good spirits but quickly brought up his recent lapse in gym attendance, stating, “I haven’t been to the gym since last Monday.” He expressed concern that his progress was “fading” and that he didn’t know why he had stopped. This was a point of self-disappointment, as he recalled the therapist previously acknowledging his dedication to the gym. He mentioned that his arms were still slightly sore from a previous intense workout with a trainer, which he felt had initially prevented him from returning to the gym sooner. He admitted to telling the trainer a white lie (“Oh, my friend’s in the hospital about to die”) to cancel a follow-up session because he felt the trainer had overworked him, leading to the soreness and subsequent break in his routine. He stated, “I feel like I basically paid him $50 for me to lose all my progress.”

Academically, Max reported having five or six finals next week, which are causing him stress due to their condensed schedule (“I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful”). He mentioned an 87 on a recent math test, which only brought his overall grade from a 77 to a 79, causing some frustration. However, he also proudly shared getting a 106 out of 110 on a psychology test where he only got two questions wrong out of 50, even without significant studying.

Regarding his social life, Max described his current approach to dating as somewhat disengaged. He recounted a recent experience swiping on Tinder with a friend on FaceTime, primarily for entertainment. They came across a classmate, Jason, whom Max knew was gay but wasn’t particularly interested in. His friend encouraged him to swipe right, which he did. Jason swiped back and later asked Max’s friend if he should talk to Max. Max hopes Jason doesn’t approach him as he feels it would be awkward to state he’s not his type, though he’d be open to friendship. He humorously noted, “Let’s just say we’re not that it matters, but let’s just say we’re both, you know, power bottoms.” He briefly mentioned another potential interest, a “fashion guy” whose style he liked, but this was not explored in depth.

Max is also navigating his upcoming dorming situation at FIT. He doesn’t have a roommate yet and is considering letting the university choose randomly, as he finds the process of messaging potential roommates awkward, especially since most people he can find on Instagram from his graduating class are freshmen, and he is a transfer student. His parents don’t see an issue with him rooming with a freshman, but Max feels it’s weird. He prefers to talk with potential roommates first rather than just messaging them on Instagram.

Work-related stressors were also discussed. Max’s boss at the butcher shop continues to be a source of annoyance, recently criticizing him for errors in reconciling the cash box at the end of night shifts (“you messed up the box again… I have to always fix your mess every single time”). Max finds this frustrating, especially since he feels his boss is often disorganized himself (e.g., forgetting to put Max on the schedule). He also recounted a recent incident where a coworker, who was sick and vomiting, called him asking him to cover her shift when he was already out with a friend who had just returned from college. Max declined, feeling it wasn’t his responsibility to drop his plans, though he did feel somewhat bad for the coworker.

On a positive note, Max shared a recent success: he sold a rare Roblox toy code online for $350. He had initially given the buyer the wrong code by mistake but rectified it. He then mused about the ethics of the situation, wondering if he *could* have scammed the buyer, but affirmed he wouldn’t actually do so (“I’m not a scammer”). This led to a brief discussion about eBay’s buyer protection policies.

Finally, Max mentioned a couple of amusing customer interactions at work: a drunk woman who desperately needed to use the employee bathroom, whom he eventually allowed to use it, and an elderly man who got confused trying to find the bathroom and almost walked into the butcher’s meat preparation area and his boss’s office. Max handled these situations with a mix of empathy and humor, eventually telling the confused elderly man there was no bathroom to prevent further misadventure.

Significant quotes: \* On gym attendance: “I haven’t been to the gym since last Monday… I feel like my progress is like fading and just I stopped, and I don’t know why I stopped it.” \* On his trainer: “I feel like I basically paid him $50 for me to lose all my progress.” \* On finals: “I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful.” \* On his boss: “I think the only hardest part about the job is having to listen to my boss be like, you didn’t do this. You made a mess. This, this, this.” \* On the Tinder interaction: “I hope he doesn’t, because I feel bad. I don’t want to say he’s not really my type.” \* On selling the Roblox toy: “I sold it for, um, $350… I was thinking about it. I was like, Wait, could I have [gotten away with not giving the correct code]?”

## Objective

Max presented for the in-person session well-groomed and casually dressed. He was alert, oriented, and maintained good eye contact throughout. His mood was generally euthymic with moments of humor, frustration, and mild anxiety, all congruent with the topics being discussed. His speech was clear, coherent, and at a normal rate and volume.

When discussing his lapse in gym attendance, Max’s tone was somewhat self-critical and disappointed. He expressed frustration about the perceived loss of progress and the arm pain that contributed to his break. When talking about his academic pressures, particularly the upcoming finals, his tone shifted to one of stress and slight overwhelm, though he also displayed pride when mentioning his high score on the psychology test. His recounting of work-related issues, especially interactions with his boss, was tinged with annoyance and exasperation. He used humor effectively when describing the eccentric customer interactions (the drunk woman, the confused elderly man) and the Tinder swiping incident, which seemed to lighten his mood.

Max appeared engaged and open throughout the session, willingly discussing a range of personal topics. He demonstrated insight into his own feelings and behaviors, such as acknowledging his lie to the trainer and his thoughts about the eBay sale. He was receptive to the therapist’s psychoeducation about muscle recovery (lactic acid, the concept of a

pump") and seemed to find this information helpful and motivating. No psychomotor agitation or retardation was observed. He maintained good rapport with the therapist.

## Assessment

Max is currently navigating a confluence of stressors common to young adulthood and college life, including academic pressure (finals week), work-related frustrations, social and dating explorations, and managing his physical wellness routine. He presents as generally resilient and resourceful, with a good capacity for humor and insight, but also experiences periods of self-criticism, frustration, and mild anxiety in response to these stressors.

His primary concern in this session appeared to be his recent lapse in gym attendance, which he framed as a loss of progress and a source of self-disappointment. This seems linked to an all-or-nothing thinking pattern regarding his fitness (feeling that a break negates previous efforts) and perhaps some lingering physical discomfort from being overworked by a trainer. His motivation for gym attendance appears to be a mix of aesthetic goals and a desire for wellness, and reframing this towards a primary value of “wellness” with aesthetic benefits as a “side effect” (as discussed in session) could be beneficial. His decision to use a white lie to cancel a training session suggests some difficulty with direct confrontation or boundary setting in that specific context, though he is capable of setting boundaries in other situations (e.g., with his coworker asking him to cover a shift).

Academically, Max is experiencing typical end-of-semester stress with multiple finals. While he expresses frustration with the grading in one class, his pride in his psychology test score indicates underlying academic capability and a capacity to succeed. The stress appears manageable, though the condensed schedule is a clear source of pressure.

Socially, Max is exploring dating apps like Tinder with a degree of casualness and for entertainment, but also shows some social awareness and sensitivity in not wanting to awkwardly reject a classmate. His consideration of a random roommate assignment for his FIT dorm reflects a practical approach but also some apprehension about initiating contact with potential roommates, particularly across different class years. This might indicate a mild social anxiety or preference for more organic social connections.

Work frustrations with his boss regarding cash reconciliation and scheduling appear to be an ongoing irritant. Max perceives his boss as disorganized and overly critical. While he finds the job itself easy, these interactions contribute to his overall stress. His handling of the coworker requesting shift coverage and the eccentric customer situations demonstrates a reasonable ability to manage unexpected workplace demands, balancing empathy with his own needs.

Max’s successful sale of the Roblox toy and his subsequent musings on the ethics of the transaction highlight a developing moral compass and an interest in understanding systems (like eBay’s policies). It also showcases his entrepreneurial spirit and ability to capitalize on niche interests.

Overall, Max presents as a well-adjusted young man facing typical developmental challenges. His coping mechanisms include humor, seeking support/discussion in therapy, practical problem-solving (selling the toy, managing customer issues), and occasional avoidance (lying to the trainer). There is no indication of a significant mental health disorder, though he experiences understandable stress and frustration related to his current life circumstances. His strengths include his intelligence, articulateness, humor, resourcefulness, and capacity for insight. Areas for continued growth include managing all-or-nothing thinking (especially regarding fitness), direct communication in potentially awkward interpersonal situations, and continued development of stress management techniques for academic and work pressures.

## Plan

1. **Continue Therapy:** Max will continue with therapy sessions as needed to address ongoing stressors, develop coping strategies, and work towards personal goals. The next session will be scheduled based on Max’s availability after his finals week; he will let the therapist know his schedule.
2. \*\*Addressing Gym Attendance & Wellness Mindset (ACT & Behavioral Activation):
   * Reinforce the value of framing gym attendance as an act of “wellness” rather than solely for aesthetics, with physical improvements as a positive side effect. This approach, based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), aims to increase intrinsic motivation.
   * Explore and challenge all-or-nothing thinking regarding fitness progress. Normalize breaks and focus on consistent effort over perfection.
   * Encourage a gradual return to the gym, starting with activities he enjoys or feels comfortable with (e.g., treadmill), especially while his arms are still recovering. Focus on movement and re-establishing routine rather than immediate high-intensity workouts.
   * Discuss the psychoeducation provided on muscle recovery (lactic acid, “pump” vs. tearing) to help Max feel more informed and in control of his workouts, reducing anxiety about soreness or perceived lack of progress.
3. \*\*Managing Academic Stress (CBT & Solution-Focused Techniques):
   * Provide continued support and psychoeducation on stress management techniques for finals week (e.g., time management, study strategies, prioritizing self-care).
   * Normalize feelings of pressure and frustration with academic challenges. Focus on celebrating successes (like the psychology test) and maintaining perspective on grades.
   * Explore solution-focused approaches to any specific academic concerns that arise.
4. \*\*Navigating Social & Dorming Situations (Interpersonal Skills & Psychoeducation):
   * Discuss strategies for navigating the Tinder interaction with Jason, focusing on polite disengagement or setting clear friendship boundaries if approached, aligning with DBT interpersonal effectiveness skills.
   * Explore options for finding a roommate at FIT, normalizing the awkwardness of reaching out and discussing the pros and cons of a random assignment versus actively seeking a roommate. Provide psychoeducation on typical college roommate dynamics and adjustment for transfer students.
5. \*\*Workplace Stress & Communication (Assertiveness Training & Problem-Solving):
   * Continue to provide a space for Max to vent frustrations about his boss and workplace dynamics.
   * Explore assertiveness skills (DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness) for communicating with his boss regarding scheduling or perceived unfair criticism, if Max feels this is appropriate or desired.
   * Problem-solve strategies for managing difficult customer interactions and cash reconciliation tasks to reduce stress.
6. \*\*Reinforcing Strengths & Ethical Considerations:
   * Acknowledge and reinforce Max’s resourcefulness (e.g., Roblox sale), humor, and insight as valuable coping mechanisms and personal strengths.
   * Briefly revisit the ethical considerations discussed regarding the eBay sale, reinforcing his decision to act honestly and the importance of fair dealings, framed within an Existential approach to personal responsibility and integrity.
7. \*\*Homework/Tasks for Next Session:
   * Monitor arm recovery and consider attempting a light gym session focusing on movement and wellness before the next therapy session, if feeling physically up to it.
   * Reflect on one specific instance during finals week where he can apply a stress management technique discussed.
   * Consider one small step he could take regarding the FIT dorming situation (e.g., researching the university’s matching process if available, or drafting a general message for potential roommates, even if he doesn’t send it yet).
8. **Referrals:** No referrals are indicated at this time.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

The session with Max on May 8, 2025, exhibited several notable tonal shifts as he navigated through various topics concerning his academic, personal, and work life.

1. **Initial Casual Banter to Self-Critical Concern:** The session began with a light, casual tone, with Max joking about the parking lot. This quickly shifted to a more concerned and self-critical tone when he brought up his missed gym sessions. Phrases like “I haven’t been to the gym since last Monday” and “I feel like my progress is like fading” were delivered with a sense of disappointment in himself, indicating that this lapse was weighing on him and affecting his self-perception regarding dedication.
2. **Concern to Frustrated Justification:** When discussing the reason for his gym absence (soreness from a trainer), his tone became one of frustrated justification. He expressed annoyance at the trainer for overworking him (“the guy worked you too hard, yeah”) and a sense of being wronged (“I feel like I basically paid him $50 for me to lose all my progress”). This shift showed his attempt to rationalize the break while also highlighting his frustration with the situation and the perceived setback.
3. **Stressed and Overwhelmed (Academics):** When the topic shifted to his upcoming finals, Max’s tone became stressed and slightly overwhelmed. His comment, “I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful,” conveyed a clear sense of academic pressure. However, this was punctuated by a proud tone when he mentioned his high score on the psychology test, indicating a capacity for academic success despite the stress.
4. **Humorous and Detached (Social/Dating):** Discussing his Tinder swiping experience and the interaction with Jason, Max adopted a humorous and somewhat detached tone. His comment about being “power bottoms” and his casual approach to the situation suggested he was using humor to navigate potentially awkward social dynamics and wasn’t heavily invested emotionally in these particular interactions. This tone also served as a way to lighten the mood of the session.
5. **Annoyed and Exasperated (Work):** When recounting issues with his boss, Max’s tone was clearly annoyed and exasperated. His imitation of his boss’s criticisms (“you messed up the box again… I have to always fix your mess every single time”) was delivered with a frustrated edge, highlighting the ongoing friction in that relationship. This contrasted with the more amused tone he used when describing the eccentric customer interactions, where he seemed to find a degree of entertainment in the absurdity of the situations.
6. **Contemplative and Ethical (Roblox Sale):** A shift to a more contemplative tone occurred when Max discussed selling the Roblox toy. His musings about whether he *could* have scammed the buyer, followed by his affirmation that he wouldn’t, indicated a moment of ethical reflection. This suggested a developing awareness of moral considerations in his transactions.
7. **Receptive and Engaged (Therapeutic Interaction):** Throughout the session, when interacting with the therapist and receiving psychoeducation (e.g., about muscle recovery), Max’s tone was generally receptive and engaged. He asked clarifying questions and seemed to absorb the information, indicating a positive therapeutic alliance and a willingness to learn and apply new perspectives.

These tonal shifts provided insight into Max’s emotional responses to different stressors and his ways of coping, ranging from self-criticism and frustration to humor and thoughtful reflection.

### Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged during Max Hafker’s therapy session on May 8, 2025, reflecting his current life stage and challenges:

1. **Striving for Self-Improvement and Fear of Regression (Gym Attendance):** Max’s significant concern about missing gym sessions (“I feel like my progress is like fading”) highlights a theme of striving for self-improvement, particularly physical fitness, and a corresponding fear of losing hard-won gains. This is tied to his self-perception and perhaps external validation. His frustration with the trainer who “overworked” him further underscores this, as it led to an undesired break in his routine.
2. **Navigating Academic Pressures:** The stress of upcoming finals (“I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful”) is a prominent theme, common for college students. His mixed results (frustration with math grade, pride in psychology score) illustrate the typical ups and downs of academic life and the pressure to perform consistently.
3. \*\*Exploring Identity and Relationships in Young Adulthood (Dating & Dorming):
   * His casual yet somewhat apprehensive approach to Tinder (“I hope he doesn’t [talk to me], because I feel bad. I don’t want to say he’s not really my type”) and the humorous “power bottoms” comment reflect an exploration of sexuality and dating dynamics with a mix of humor and underlying social awareness/awkwardness.
   * His concerns about finding a roommate at FIT, particularly the perceived weirdness of rooming with a freshman as a transfer student, point to the broader theme of navigating new social environments and establishing connections in a new phase of life.
4. **Workplace Frustration and Interpersonal Dynamics:** Max’s ongoing issues with his boss at the butcher shop (“I think the only hardest part about the job is having to listen to my boss be like, you didn’t do this. You made a mess”) represent a theme of dealing with difficult authority figures and workplace stressors. His ability to handle eccentric customers with humor, however, shows resilience in other aspects of the job.
5. **Ethical Considerations and Resourcefulness:** The successful sale of the Roblox toy for $350 and his brief contemplation of whether he *could* have scammed the buyer (“I was thinking about it. I was like, Wait, could I have?”) before affirming his honesty (“I’m not a scammer”) touches upon themes of ethical decision-making and personal integrity. It also highlights his resourcefulness and entrepreneurial tendencies.

These themes collectively paint a picture of a young adult actively engaging with various life domains, experiencing typical stressors, and developing his sense of self, his coping mechanisms, and his understanding of interpersonal relationships and responsibilities.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Max expressed a mix of sentiments about himself. There was clear **self-criticism and disappointment** regarding his gym lapse (“I feel like my progress is like fading and just I stopped, and I don’t know why I stopped it”). He also showed **frustration** with his perceived inability to maintain his routine after the trainer incident. However, moments of **pride and competence** emerged when discussing his psychology test score (“I got a 106 out of 110… I only got two wrong”) and his successful Roblox sale. He also displayed **self-awareness** in acknowledging his lie to the trainer and his ethical considerations regarding the sale, affirming, “I’m not a scammer.”

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Trainer:** Strong **frustration and a sense of being wronged** (“I feel like I basically paid him $50 for me to lose all my progress”). \* **Academics/Finals:** **Stress and overwhelm** (“I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful”), but also **satisfaction** with specific achievements (psychology test). \* **Boss:** Predominantly **annoyance and exasperation** (“I think the only hardest part about the job is having to listen to my boss be like, you didn’t do this. You made a mess”). \* **Jason (Tinder match):** Mild **apprehension and awkwardness** (“I hope he doesn’t, because I feel bad. I don’t want to say he’s not really my type”), but also a willingness for friendship. \* **Coworker (sick):** Some **guilt/empathy** but also a clear sense of **boundary assertion** in not covering the shift. \* **Customers (eccentric):** Primarily **amusement and a sense of bemusement**.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Max appeared to have a **positive and engaged sentiment** towards therapy. He was open in sharing his struggles and successes, receptive to psychoeducation (e.g., about muscle recovery), and seemed to value the therapist’s input. His willingness to discuss a range of topics from personal disappointments to humorous anecdotes suggests a comfortable and trusting therapeutic relationship.

**Sentiment Shifts:** The session began with a casual tone, shifting to **disappointment/frustration** (gym), then to **stress** (finals), interspersed with **pride** (psychology test). Discussions about social life brought **humor and mild awkwardness** (Tinder), while work issues elicited **annoyance** (boss) and **amusement** (customers). The Roblox sale introduced a **contemplative and then proud/resourceful sentiment**. Overall, the sentiment fluctuated according to the topic, but Max generally returned to a baseline of engaged and open interaction with the therapist.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor’s) reactions included empathy for Max’s self-criticism regarding the gym and his academic stress, as these are common yet impactful struggles for young adults. I also felt a sense of amusement at his humorous storytelling and appreciation for his resourcefulness and developing ethical awareness. A potential countertransference could be to over-emphasize problem-solving for his work frustrations, rather than allowing him space to vent and explore his own solutions. It was important to balance validation of his feelings with psychoeducation and collaborative exploration of coping strategies, particularly reframing his approach to fitness through an ACT lens of wellness as a core value. The aim was to foster his intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy.

### Key Points

* **Lapse in Gym Routine and Self-Criticism:** Max is experiencing self-disappointment and concern over a recent break in his gym attendance, fearing a loss of progress and struggling with motivation after a painful experience with a trainer.
  + *Relevance:* This highlights Max’s value on physical fitness and self-discipline, but also a potential for all-or-nothing thinking. Addressing this is key to fostering a sustainable and healthy approach to wellness.
* **Academic Stress from Finals:** Max is feeling pressured by the condensed schedule of his upcoming final exams, experiencing frustration with some grades while also achieving notable successes in other areas.
  + *Relevance:* This is a significant current stressor impacting his well-being. Supporting him with stress management and perspective-taking is important for his academic and emotional health.
* **Navigating Workplace and Social Dynamics:** Max is dealing with ongoing frustrations with his boss, managing awkward social/dating interactions, and making decisions about his upcoming college dorming situation.
  + *Relevance:* These situations provide opportunities to develop interpersonal effectiveness skills, boundary setting, and coping mechanisms for common frustrations of young adulthood and transitions.

### Significant Quotes

* “I haven’t been to the gym since last Monday… I feel like my progress is like fading and just I stopped, and I don’t know why I stopped it.”
  + *Context:* Max expressing his primary concern at the beginning of the session regarding his break from his gym routine.
  + *Significance:* This quote encapsulates his self-criticism, his fear of losing gains, and his struggle with a perceived lack of motivation or understanding for his own behavior. It sets the stage for exploring his relationship with fitness and potential all-or-nothing thinking.
* “I feel like I basically paid him $50 for me to lose all my progress.”
  + *Context:* Max referring to the personal trainer who he felt overworked him, leading to soreness and his subsequent gym avoidance.
  + *Significance:* This highlights his frustration and sense of being counterproductively impacted by an experience that was meant to be helpful. It also touches on his financial awareness and the value he places on his efforts.
* “I hate how they’re all next week, like, just cramped together, awful.”
  + *Context:* Max describing his feelings about his upcoming final exams schedule.
  + *Significance:* This clearly expresses the academic stress and pressure he is currently under, a common experience for students that can impact overall well-being and performance.
* “I think the only hardest part about the job is having to listen to my boss be like, you didn’t do this. You made a mess. This, this, this.”
  + *Context:* Max discussing the primary source of his frustration at his butcher shop job.
  + *Significance:* This quote points to ongoing interpersonal conflict and criticism from an authority figure, which is a significant stressor and impacts his job satisfaction despite finding the actual work easy.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Max Hafker attended his in-person therapy session on May 8, 2025, presenting with a mix of good spirits and underlying concerns. A primary issue was his recent lapse in gym attendance since the previous Monday, which he attributed initially to severe arm soreness from an intense session with a new trainer. He expressed significant self-disappointment, fearing his fitness progress was

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Freddy Rodriguez’s Therapy Session on May 8, 2025



## Subjective

Freddy presented to the session on May 8, 2025, in a state of significant distress, primarily focused on a recent and escalating family crisis involving his sister-in-law, Stephanie, and his twin brother, Anthony. He reported that two days prior (Tuesday), Stephanie had called him crying, asking him to pick her up. Upon arrival at their home, Freddy found Anthony yelling and confrontational, calling Stephanie derogatory names. Freddy intervened, stating he wouldn’t speak to Anthony in that state and questioning his brother’s treatment of his wife. As Freddy left with Stephanie and her daughters, Anthony began sending rage-filled texts, threatening to come to Freddy’s house to “settle this…his way.” Freddy immediately texted Anthony not to come and that he would call the police if he did.

Freddy recounted feeling overwhelmed and unsure who to call, eventually contacting his cousin Michelle in Texas to try and de-escalate Anthony, which was temporarily successful. Stephanie then disclosed to Freddy the details of her argument with Anthony, which she couldn’t pinpoint the exact cause of, but described ongoing berating behavior from Anthony. A particularly hurtful point for Stephanie was Anthony still bringing up her alleged lack of attention to him during her hospital stay after giving birth. Anthony had also sent Freddy aggressive texts, including calling him a “pussy” and a “salty little bitch,” and giving Stephanie “three days” to decide what would happen with their relationship.

Freddy shared a text exchange where he defended his actions to Anthony, stating he was merely responding to a crying sister-in-law’s request for help and that Anthony needed to take responsibility for his own family. Anthony twisted this, accusing Freddy of interfering in his marriage and washing his hands of the situation. Anthony’s texts were filled with accusations, calling Freddy a “little snake” and claiming Freddy never had his best interests at heart.

Stephanie was described as “very afraid, frazzled” when Freddy picked her up. She later opened up to Freddy about Anthony’s controlling behaviors, such as not helping with childcare, spending excessive time in bed, his erratic work schedule, and verbally berating her (e.g., for not cooking or cleaning to his standards, while he himself leaves messes). Stephanie had previously told Freddy her incentive to get her driver’s license was to leave Anthony, and during this recent incident, she reiterated, “That’s it. I can’t…she’s done.” Freddy had offered Stephanie and her daughters a safe space at his home.

The situation escalated the next morning (Wednesday) when Anthony showed up outside Freddy’s house at 5 am, blocking his driveway. Freddy’s brother-in-law (Matt’s brother, Allison’s husband) initially spoke to Anthony, who refused to leave, insisting on talking to Freddy. Freddy, after being encouraged by Allison to see what Anthony wanted, went outside and asked Anthony to talk, but Anthony responded by turning up his car radio. Freddy then called the police. He described the police response as frustratingly dismissive at first, with an officer asking, “Okay, and what’s the problem?” even after Freddy explained the domestic situation and that Anthony was blocking his driveway. The police eventually spoke to Anthony, who was described as “high strung.” Matt (Freddy’s partner) mentioned Anthony’s bipolar disorder to the police. The police then seemed to side with Anthony’s desire to see his daughter, despite Freddy explaining they were married and there was no custody agreement. Stephanie, not wanting to cause more problems, ended up giving their daughter, Analee, to Anthony, which deeply upset Freddy.

Later, Anthony FaceTimed Deanna (Stephanie’s older daughter, not Anthony’s biological child) acting calm, and Deanna mentioned the police presence. Stephanie initially stayed with Freddy’s cousin, Gisette. Anthony then sent threatening voice messages to Gisette, leading Gisette to feel Stephanie would have to leave her house due to safety concerns for her own family and business. Freddy felt a profound sense of loss, stating, “I feel like I lost my family today.” Anthony continued to send threatening texts to Freddy, warning him to stay away from his family and daughters, accusing him of never having his interest at heart, and stating they didn’t need Freddy’s money or assistance.

Freddy also got into an argument with his mother over the phone, who he felt was making the situation about herself (“you guys are going to finish me off”) and enabling Anthony. Freddy sent his mother a powerful text reminding her of her own past struggles as a single mother who received help, contrasting it with her current lack of support for Stephanie. His mother apparently shared this text with Anthony, who then texted Freddy, “Why text mom? Leave it alone, bro, you’re barking up the wrong tree.” Stephanie also sent Freddy a text, which he perceived as coerced, asking him to maintain his distance to avoid further misunderstandings with Anthony, while also expressing gratitude and hope for future reconciliation for the sake of the children. Freddy had given Stephanie $400 in an envelope, as she had said she was done with Anthony and was considering her options, including possibly staying with her mother or family in Pennsylvania.

Freddy expressed feeling like the “black sheep” in his family and that this incident, particularly his mother’s reaction, might permanently damage his relationship with her. He felt he did what he was supposed to do by helping Stephanie. He also mentioned a past incident where a cousin pulled a gun on him and his mother took the cousin’s side, drawing parallels to his current feelings of being unsupported and unfairly blamed.

Significant quotes: \* Stephanie to Freddy: “come pick me up, Fplease. That’s it.” \* Anthony’s text to Freddy: “She has three days please, and thanks… Thank you dickhead. I never get involved in your marriage. I allow you into mine. And now you’re now. They are my family.” \* Anthony’s text to Freddy: “You make me sick with the hate that comes out of your stupid mouth, you little snake.” \* Freddy on police response: “And the cop leader looks at me, and it’s like, Okay, and what’s the problem? I’m like, Excuse me, I’m like, he’s blocking my driveway.” \* Freddy on the impact: “I feel like I lost my family today, not that I was close to them, but I feel like I lost my family today.” \* Anthony’s text to Freddy: “If I find out that you’re with my daughters, I will have you arrested. Please do not involve yourself with my family either. I open the doors for you to my family, and the other day you close them.” \* Freddy’s text to his mother: “remember that you came to this country without anyone from your family, just so that your husband can leave you in an apartment with three children. At least Freddie left our father. He didn’t abuse you like Anthony’s abusing Stephanie… I can’t see a woman suffering because of a man who’s not well.” \* Stephanie’s text to Freddy: “it is better that you keep your distance, even if it’s for the moment. I don’t want there to be more misunderstanding between you and Anthony.”

## Objective

Freddy presented for the session visibly distressed, with a predominantly anxious and frustrated mood. His affect was congruent with the reported crisis, showing tearfulness at times, particularly when discussing the perceived loss of his family and his nieces. His speech was rapid and pressured at times, especially when recounting the more intense confrontations and text exchanges. He maintained good eye contact and was fully oriented.

Throughout the session, Freddy described a series of highly charged emotional events. His body language indicated tension; he often gestured emphatically while speaking. He reported feeling overwhelmed and sad. When discussing his brother Anthony’s behavior, Freddy’s tone was a mixture of anger, disbelief, and hurt. He expressed significant frustration with the police response, perceiving it as dismissive and unhelpful, which exacerbated his distress.

Freddy demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility and protectiveness towards his sister-in-law, Stephanie, and her children. He was able to articulate his motivations for intervening (responding to Stephanie’s cry for help) and his subsequent actions (offering shelter, calling the police when threatened). He also showed insight into his family dynamics, recognizing patterns of enabling behavior in his mother and manipulative tactics in his brother. He expressed a deep sense of injustice at being blamed for the situation when he felt he was acting appropriately.

He was highly engaged in the therapeutic process, using the session to process the traumatic events and his emotional reactions. He was receptive to the therapist’s reflections and validation of his experience, particularly regarding the dynamics of domestic abuse and gaslighting. No signs of psychosis or formal thought disorder were observed. His cognitive functioning appeared intact, though his emotional state was clearly impacted by the acute stress.

## Assessment

Freddy is experiencing an acute family crisis characterized by domestic conflict, emotional abuse, and potential physical intimidation involving his twin brother Anthony and sister-in-law Stephanie. Freddy has been drawn into the conflict as a primary support for Stephanie, leading to direct confrontation with Anthony and significant distress for Freddy himself. His presentation is consistent with an acute stress reaction to these traumatic events.

The central issue is Anthony’s abusive and manipulative behavior towards Stephanie, which includes verbal aggression (calling her derogatory names, berating her), controlling actions (monitoring her, dictating terms), emotional blackmail (blaming her for his unhappiness, bringing up past perceived slights like lack of attention in the hospital), and potential physical intimidation (Stephanie reporting he “pushed” her, Anthony’s threatening texts and behavior like blocking Freddy’s driveway). Anthony’s actions, including his rage texts, threats (“You know what I’m capable of?”), and disregard for boundaries (showing up at Freddy’s house uninvited, refusing to leave), suggest a pattern of coercive control and a propensity for escalation. His reported bipolar disorder, as mentioned by Matt to the police, may contribute to his emotional dysregulation and impulsivity, but does not excuse his abusive behavior.

Stephanie appears to be in a classic cycle of domestic abuse. She reaches out for help in moments of crisis (calling Freddy, stating she is “done”), but also shows signs of returning to the abusive situation or being coerced into placating Anthony (texting Freddy to keep his distance, potentially to de-escalate Anthony or due to fear). Her fear is palpable, as reported by Freddy and Gisette. She feels trapped, likely due to emotional manipulation, fear of Anthony’s reactions, concern for her children, and possibly financial dependence or lack of immediate alternative housing, despite Freddy and Gisette offering temporary shelter.

Freddy has acted as a protective figure for Stephanie and her children. His actions (picking Stephanie up, offering shelter, confronting Anthony’s verbal abuse, calling the police when threatened) were appropriate responses to an escalating and dangerous situation. However, these actions have placed him in direct conflict with Anthony and have also strained his relationship with his mother, whom he perceives as enabling Anthony and not supporting Stephanie adequately. Freddy’s feeling of being the “black sheep” and his history of feeling unsupported by his mother in past family conflicts (e.g., the incident with the cousin and the gun) are being reactivated, leading to feelings of isolation and a sense of having “lost his family.”

Freddy’s frustration with the police response is also a significant stressor. He perceived the officers as initially dismissive of the seriousness of the situation, which is a common experience for those reporting domestic disputes and can be deeply invalidating. The police decision to seemingly facilitate Anthony’s access to Analee despite the reported conflict and Anthony’s agitated state further compounded Freddy’s distress and sense of helplessness.

Freddy’s strengths include his empathy, courage in confronting abuse, loyalty to Stephanie, and his ability to articulate his experiences and emotions clearly. He is demonstrating resilience in the face of significant stress, though the emotional toll is evident. His risk factors include becoming further enmeshed in a dangerous family conflict, potential retaliation from Anthony, and the emotional impact of feeling isolated from his wider family. The situation is highly volatile, and Stephanie and her children remain at risk as long as Anthony’s abusive behavior continues unchecked and Stephanie feels unable to leave permanently.

Freddy’s insight into his brother’s manipulative tactics and his mother’s enabling patterns is a protective factor for his own mental well-being, though it also contributes to his current sense of disillusionment and sadness. The financial support ($400) he provided to Stephanie underscores his commitment but also his potential for becoming overly involved in a way that might be unsustainable or create further conflict if Stephanie returns to Anthony and the money becomes a point of contention.

## Plan

1. **Safety Planning & Support for Freddy:**
   * Validate Freddy’s feelings of distress, fear, and frustration. Reiterate that his actions in supporting Stephanie were appropriate and protective.
   * Discuss safety planning for Freddy, given Anthony’s threats and escalating behavior. This includes reinforcing his decision to call the police and considering if any further steps are needed to ensure his and Matt’s safety (e.g., documenting threats, security measures).
   * Encourage Freddy to continue utilizing his support system (Matt, Gisette, other trusted friends/family) and to lean on them during this crisis. (Narrative Therapy approach to externalizing the problem and building a supportive community).
2. \*\*Managing Emotional Impact & Family Dynamics (ACT & DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness):
   * Continue to provide a supportive space for Freddy to process the traumatic events and his complex emotions (sadness, anger, fear, disillusionment) using principles from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to acknowledge and make room for difficult feelings without being overwhelmed by them.
   * Explore Freddy’s feelings of having “lost his family” and being the “black sheep.” Help him differentiate between his hope for his family and the current reality of their dysfunctional dynamics. Address grief related to these perceived losses.
   * Discuss strategies for managing interactions with his mother, focusing on setting boundaries to protect his emotional well-being while acknowledging his pain regarding her perceived lack of support. Utilize DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness skills (e.g., DEAR MAN) if he chooses to communicate his feelings or needs to her in the future.
   * Help Freddy maintain perspective on Stephanie’s actions (e.g., her text asking him to keep his distance), recognizing the immense pressure and fear she is likely under, which may lead to decisions that are difficult for Freddy to understand but are aimed at her own (perceived) safety or de-escalation.
3. \*\*Supporting Stephanie (Indirectly) & Understanding Abuse Dynamics (Psychoeducation):
   * Provide psychoeducation on the dynamics of domestic violence and the cycle of abuse to help Freddy understand Stephanie’s behavior and the challenges she faces in leaving the abusive relationship. This includes understanding concepts like trauma bonding, learned helplessness, and the difficulties in breaking free from an abuser. (Existential themes of choice and responsibility within constraints can be woven in).
   * Discuss ways Freddy can continue to offer support to Stephanie from a safe distance, respecting her current stated wishes (which may be coerced) while leaving the door open for future help if she seeks it. This might include periodically checking in via a safe third party if appropriate, or simply letting her know he is there for her if/when she is ready.
   * Emphasize that Freddy cannot control Stephanie’s choices but can control his own responses and boundaries.
4. \*\*Addressing Past Trauma & Family Patterns (Narrative Therapy):
   * Gently explore the connection Freddy made between the current situation with his mother and past incidents where he felt unsupported (e.g., the cousin with the gun). Use Narrative Therapy techniques to deconstruct these problem-saturated stories and identify alternative narratives of strength, resilience, and self-protection that Freddy has demonstrated.
   * Help Freddy identify and reinforce his own values (e.g., justice, protection of vulnerable individuals, loyalty) that guided his actions, even if these values clash with those of some family members.
5. **Self-Care & Stress Management:**
   * Collaboratively develop a self-care plan for Freddy to manage the acute stress, including activities that promote relaxation, emotional regulation, and a sense of normalcy (e.g., exercise, hobbies, spending time with Matt, mindfulness practices).
   * Monitor for symptoms of acute stress disorder or PTSD and provide appropriate interventions or referrals if needed.
6. **Homework/Tasks for Next Session:**
   * Freddy to document any further threatening interactions with Anthony, if they occur, for safety and potential legal purposes.
   * Practice one self-care activity daily to manage stress.
   * Reflect on one boundary he can set or maintain with a family member (e.g., his mother or Anthony) that would protect his emotional well-being, and consider what a values-aligned communication of that boundary might look like (even if not enacted immediately).
7. **Referrals:** Discuss potential for Stephanie to access domestic violence support services (e.g., hotline, shelter, counseling) if she becomes open to it. Freddy can be provided with this information to share if an opportunity arises, but the focus remains on Freddy’s well-being and his role as a supportive but not primary intervener for Stephanie’s situation unless she directly asks for specific help he can safely provide.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

Freddy Rodriguez’s session on May 8, 2025, was characterized by intense and fluctuating emotional tones, reflecting the acute crisis he was experiencing.

1. **Initial Overwhelm and Urgency:** Freddy began the session with a tone of clear overwhelm and urgency. His speech was often rapid and pressured as he recounted the rapidly unfolding events of the previous two days. This tone conveyed the immediacy and severity of the crisis, and his struggle to process the barrage of confrontations, threats, and emotional disclosures.
2. **Anger and Disbelief (Towards Anthony):** When describing his brother Anthony’s actions and texts (e.g., derogatory names, threats, accusations like being a “little snake”), Freddy’s tone shifted to one of palpable anger, disbelief, and hurt. There was a sense of betrayal and shock at the level of aggression and manipulation directed towards him and Stephanie.
3. **Frustration and Impotence (Police Response):** A distinct tone of frustration and a sense of impotence emerged when Freddy detailed his interaction with the police. His recounting of the officer’s initial dismissive question (“Okay, and what’s the problem?”) was laced with exasperation. This tone highlighted his feeling of being unsupported and invalidated by an authority figure he had turned to for help in a dangerous situation.
4. **Protective Concern and Empathy (Towards Stephanie & Nieces):** When speaking about Stephanie’s fear and distress, and the well-being of his nieces, Freddy’s tone softened to one of deep concern, empathy, and protectiveness. His voice sometimes wavered, indicating the emotional impact of witnessing their suffering and his desire to shield them.
5. **Hurt and Disillusionment (Towards Mother & Family System):** Discussing his mother’s reaction and his feeling of being the “black sheep,” Freddy’s tone was filled with hurt, sadness, and disillusionment. His statement, “I feel like I lost my family today,” was delivered with a profound sense of loss. This tone underscored the pain of perceived familial abandonment and the reactivation of past wounds related to feeling unsupported.
6. **Defensive Justification (His Own Actions):** At times, particularly when recounting his text exchanges with Anthony or his mother, Freddy’s tone took on a quality of defensive justification. He was keen to explain that his actions were solely in response to Stephanie’s cry for help and that he was acting appropriately, reflecting his need for validation in the face of blame and gaslighting.
7. **Resigned Sadness (Stephanie’s Coerced Text):** When reading Stephanie’s text asking him to keep his distance, Freddy’s tone was one of resigned sadness and an understanding that she was likely acting under duress. There was a sense of helplessness in this, acknowledging the power Anthony still held over her.

These tonal shifts painted a vivid picture of Freddy’s emotional turmoil, his strong moral compass, and the profound impact of the family crisis on his sense of safety, belonging, and justice.

### Thematic Analysis

Several critical themes emerged from Freddy Rodriguez’s therapy session on May 8, 2025, highlighting the complex and dangerous family dynamics at play:

1. **Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control:** This is the central theme, with Anthony’s behavior towards Stephanie exhibiting classic patterns of emotional and verbal abuse, controlling tactics (giving her “three days”), and intimidation. Stephanie’s fear, her vacillation between wanting to leave and placating Anthony, and her disclosure of his berating and controlling behaviors (“he doesn’t help with the kids… he’s always in bed… he’ll start berating her”) are all indicative of an abusive relationship. Anthony’s actions towards Freddy (threats, blocking driveway) also demonstrate a pattern of aggression and intimidation used to control the situation.
2. **Intervention and its Perils (The Rescuer Role):** Freddy stepped into the role of rescuer in response to Stephanie’s plea for help (“come pick me up, Fplease”). While his intentions were protective, this theme explores the dangers and complexities of intervening in domestic abuse situations, including becoming a target for the abuser’s rage, as evidenced by Anthony’s threats and accusations against Freddy (“You make me sick with the hate that comes out of your stupid mouth, you little snake”).
3. **Family Enmeshment, Loyalty Conflicts, and Enabling:** The crisis has exposed deep-seated dysfunctional family dynamics. Freddy’s mother’s reaction (making it about herself, seemingly enabling Anthony by sharing Freddy’s text) highlights themes of enabling and loyalty conflicts. Freddy’s feeling of being the “black sheep” and his reference to a past incident where his mother sided with an aggressor suggest a long-standing pattern where he feels unsupported or scapegoated within the family system when he stands up against perceived injustice.
4. **The Failure of External Systems (Police Response):** Freddy’s frustrating experience with the police (“Okay, and what’s the problem?”) underscores a painful theme for many who seek help in domestic disputes: the perceived inadequacy or dismissiveness of official systems. This lack of effective external intervention can leave victims and those trying to help them feeling more vulnerable and helpless.
5. **Gaslighting and Manipulation:** Anthony’s attempts to twist Freddy’s actions (accusing Freddy of interfering and washing his hands of the situation, claiming Freddy never had his best interests at heart) are clear examples of gaslighting and manipulation. This theme is crucial in understanding the psychological tactics used by abusers to maintain control and deflect responsibility.
6. **Loss, Grief, and Moral Injury:** Freddy’s statement, “I feel like I lost my family today,” encapsulates a profound sense of loss and grief, not just for the immediate relationships but potentially for the idealized version of family he may have hoped for. The situation, particularly being blamed for trying to help, may also be causing a moral injury, where his deeply held values of protection and justice are violated by the actions of his family and the perceived failure of the police.

These themes are interwoven, creating a complex tapestry of acute crisis, historical family dysfunction, and the profound emotional and psychological impact on Freddy as he attempts to navigate an extremely challenging and dangerous situation.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Freddy expressed a strong sense of **righteousness and justification** for his actions (“I feel like I did what I was supposed to do”). However, this was heavily overlaid with **distress, overwhelm, and sadness** (“I feel like I lost my family today”). There was also a clear sentiment of **feeling unsupported and like a “black sheep”** within his family, a painful and recurring self-perception. He also expressed **fear** in response to Anthony’s threats and behavior.

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Anthony (Brother):** Predominantly **anger, disbelief, hurt, and fear**. Freddy described Anthony’s actions as abusive and manipulative, using phrases like “rage texts” and detailing threats. Quotes like, “You make me sick with the hate that comes out of your stupid mouth, you little snake,” (from Anthony to Freddy) illustrate the venom directed at him. \* **Stephanie (Sister-in-law):** Deep **concern, empathy, and protectiveness**. Freddy described her as “very afraid, frazzled” and was motivated by her distress. There was also a sense of **frustration and sadness** when Stephanie, perceived as coerced, asked him to keep his distance. \* **Mother:** Significant **disappointment, hurt, and anger**. Freddy felt his mother was enabling Anthony and not supporting Stephanie or him, stating she was “making it about herself.” His text to her was an attempt to confront this perceived injustice. \* **Police:** Strong **frustration, disbelief, and a sense of being dismissed and invalidated** (“Okay, and what’s the problem?”). He felt they did not take the situation seriously enough and even sided with Anthony. \* **Gisette (Cousin):** **Gratitude** for her initial support of Stephanie, but also **understanding and resignation** when Gisette felt Stephanie had to leave due to Anthony’s threats to her own family.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Freddy appeared to view the therapy session as a **vital space for processing and validation**. He was highly expressive, shared deeply personal and traumatic details, and seemed to seek understanding and support. His willingness to recount the events in such detail suggests he felt safe and that the therapeutic process was helpful for him to articulate and begin to make sense of the overwhelming experience.

**Sentiment Shifts:** The session was characterized by rapid and intense shifts in sentiment, mirroring the chaotic nature of the crisis. From **urgent recounting** of events, his sentiment would shift to **anger and disbelief** (discussing Anthony), then to **frustration** (police), to **deep sadness and hurt** (family, Stephanie’s coerced text), and then to **protective concern** (Stephanie and nieces). There were few moments of neutral or positive sentiment, given the acute nature of the crisis.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor’s) primary sentimental reactions were strong empathy for Freddy’s distress, concern for his safety and the safety of Stephanie and her children, and a sense of validation for his protective actions. There was also frustration on his behalf regarding the police response and his mother’s perceived enabling. A key countertransference risk would be to become overly directive or to align too strongly with Freddy’s anger, potentially hindering his own processing or sense of agency. It was crucial to maintain a supportive, validating stance while also focusing on psychoeducation about abuse dynamics, safety planning, and helping Freddy manage his own overwhelming emotions and navigate his complex family system. The focus was on empowering Freddy to make informed choices for his own well-being while understanding the limitations of his ability to control others’ actions, particularly Stephanie’s, within an abusive context.

### Key Points

* **Acute Family Crisis and Domestic Abuse Intervention:** Freddy is in the midst of a severe family crisis, having intervened to help his sister-in-law, Stephanie, escape an abusive situation with his twin brother, Anthony. This has resulted in threats against Freddy and significant emotional turmoil.
  + *Relevance:* This is the central, overwhelming stressor. Freddy’s safety, emotional well-being, and understanding of the complex abuse dynamics are paramount therapy goals.
* **Feeling Unsupported and Scapegoated by Family:** Freddy feels his mother is enabling Anthony and not supporting him or Stephanie, reactivating past feelings of being the “black sheep” and unsupported in family conflicts.
  + *Relevance:* This highlights deep-seated family dysfunction and its impact on Freddy’s sense of belonging and justice. Addressing these feelings and relational patterns is crucial for his long-term well-being.
* **Frustration with Systemic Failures (Police Response):** Freddy experienced the police response as dismissive and unhelpful, exacerbating his distress and sense of helplessness in a dangerous situation.
  + *Relevance:* This underscores the secondary trauma that can occur when seeking help from official systems. Validating this experience and discussing coping with such systemic failures is important.

### Significant Quotes

* Anthony’s text to Freddy: “She has three days please, and thanks… Thank you dickhead. I never get involved in your marriage. I allow you into mine. And now you’re now. They are my family.”
  + *Context:* Part of a series of aggressive texts from Anthony to Freddy after Freddy helped Stephanie leave.
  + *Significance:* This quote illustrates Anthony’s controlling nature, his sense of ownership over Stephanie (“She has three days”), his use of derogatory language, and his attempt to gaslight Freddy by framing Freddy’s protective actions as an unwelcome intrusion into “his” family and marriage.
* Freddy on the impact of the crisis: “I feel like I lost my family today, not that I was close to them, but I feel like I lost my family today.”
  + *Context:* Freddy reflecting on the events, particularly his mother’s reaction and Anthony’s threats.
  + *Significance:* This powerfully conveys the profound sense of loss and alienation Freddy is experiencing. It speaks to the potential severing of family ties and the deep emotional wound inflicted by the conflict and perceived lack of support.
* Freddy’s text to his mother: “remember that you came to this country without anyone from your family, just so that your husband can leave you in an apartment with three children. At least Freddie left our father. He didn’t abuse you like Anthony’s abusing Stephanie… I can’t see a woman suffering because of a man who’s not well.”
  + *Context:* A text Freddy sent to his mother after a frustrating phone call where he felt she was not supporting Stephanie or him.
  + *Significance:* This quote reveals Freddy’s strong moral stance against abuse, his attempt to appeal to his mother’s own past experiences to evoke empathy, and his deep frustration with her current perceived enabling of Anthony. It highlights his courage in confronting family members but also the potential for further alienating them.
* Stephanie’s text to Freddy: “it is better that you keep your distance, even if it’s for the moment. I don’t want there to be more misunderstanding between you and Anthony.”
  + *Context:* A text Stephanie sent to Freddy after the police incident and after staying with Gisette briefly.
  + *Significance:* Freddy perceived this text as likely coerced by Anthony. It illustrates the complex dynamics of an abusive relationship, where the victim may act to placate the abuser or protect others from the abuser’s wrath, even if it means distancing from support. It adds to Freddy’s sense of helplessness and confusion.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Freddy Rodriguez presented for his therapy session on May 8, 2025, in a state of acute distress following a rapidly escalating family crisis involving his twin brother, Anthony, and sister-in-law, Stephanie. Two days prior, Freddy had responded to a tearful call from Stephanie, picking her up from her home where Anthony was verbally abusing her. This intervention led to a barrage of threatening and aggressive texts from Anthony to Freddy, including threats to come to Freddy’s house. The situation intensified the following morning when Anthony appeared outside Freddy’s home at 5 am, blocking his driveway and refusing to leave, prompting Freddy to call the police. Freddy described the police response as initially dismissive and frustrating, ultimately resulting in Stephanie, under duress, allowing their daughter to go with Anthony.

Stephanie had disclosed to Freddy ongoing controlling and berating behavior from Anthony. Following the police incident, Anthony sent threatening messages to Freddy’s cousin, Gisette, where Stephanie had briefly sought refuge, leading Gisette to feel Stephanie could no longer stay. Anthony continued to send threatening texts to Freddy, warning him to stay away from “his” family. Freddy also had a distressing argument with his mother, whom he felt was enabling Anthony and not supporting Stephanie or him, leading him to send his mother a text reminding her of her own past struggles. Stephanie later sent Freddy a text, which he believed was coerced, asking him to keep his distance to avoid further issues with Anthony. Freddy had provided Stephanie with $400 as she contemplated her options.

Freddy expressed feeling overwhelmed, fearful, and profoundly sad, stating, “I feel like I lost my family today.” He felt like the “black sheep” for trying to do the right thing and was deeply hurt by his mother’s perceived lack of support, drawing parallels to past family conflicts. The session focused on validating Freddy’s experience and actions, safety planning, processing his intense emotions, psychoeducation on domestic abuse dynamics, and exploring strategies for managing family interactions and his own well-being amidst this ongoing crisis. Freddy was encouraged to utilize his support system and focus on self-care.

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Jennifer McNally’s Therapy Session on May 8, 2025

## Subjective

Jennifer returned to therapy on May 8, 2025, after a hiatus. She began by expressing gratitude for being taken back, explaining her previous discontinuation was due to feeling unready to establish boundaries with others, which impacted her ability to commit to therapy. Specifically, she mentioned her schedule became inconsistent due to prioritizing picking up her mother from work and a lack of a consistent work schedule herself, leading to self-sacrificing behaviors. She also admitted she wasn’t ready for the emotional work required in therapy at that time.

Since her last period of therapy, Jennifer reported significant life changes and stressors. She and her partner, Trevor, moved in together in May of the previous year, and they got married in October. The wedding planning process was a major source of stress, with numerous opinions from family members, particularly her mother, whose “true colors were coming in.” Her mother threatened not to come to the wedding twice due to disagreements, such as Jennifer not getting married in their specific parish church. Jennifer felt pressured to meet everyone’s expectations. Her mother-in-law, while meaning well, took over the bridal shower, which traditionally would have been her mother’s role, causing further tension.

Jennifer also described her previous job environment as “insane,” with unreasonable demands and behaviors from her employers, contributing to her feeling like she was “spinning in like this, like tornado.” She has since switched to a new job in Limbrock, hoping it would help, though acknowledging it wouldn’t fix everything.

A significant concern Jennifer raised is a persistent feeling of derealization, which she first noticed around the summer of the previous year. She described it as feeling “foggy,” “like I’m here, but I’m not here,” or “like I’m kind of drunk” even when sober. This feeling is mostly constant and is linked to heightened anxiety. She also reported increased irritability, getting mad or frustrated by things that normally wouldn’t bother her, particularly with Trevor. She acknowledged a lack of motivation, feeling tired and upset, and struggling to do things around the house, with Trevor taking on most responsibilities like cooking and cleaning.

Jennifer disclosed experiencing suicidal thoughts, stating she has had them but “nothing that was like, to the extreme where I was scared.” However, she gets nervous being home alone when Trevor is away due to these thoughts, though she feels she can “quiet” them and they don’t take over. She also reported that her OCD symptoms have worsened, including developing repetitive pre-sleep routines for comfort that also cause her stress.

During the session, Jennifer completed several assessment scales (BAI, BDI, Perceived Stress Scale, Quality of Life Scale). The results indicated mild anxiety, severe depression (with somatic, affective, and cognitive aspects tied), moderate perceived stress, and an “okay-ish” quality of life. She agreed these results felt accurate, noting her increased irritability and functional decline.

When asked what to focus on, Jennifer identified creating boundaries as a priority, particularly with family, to protect her peace. She mentioned having started to implement boundaries with “Hannah” (presumably Trevor’s brother’s partner, based on later context), which has brought her some peace and reduced guilt. She recounted an incident where Hannah and her partner made plans for yoga, failed to confirm, and then were unapologetic, leading Jennifer to decide to distance herself and do the “bare minimum” in interactions. She is now trying to maintain these boundaries even when Trevor doesn’t, stating, “I am going to respect my boundaries, because I am the one who feels it.”

She also discussed dynamics around her bachelorette party where she felt Hannah tried to “commandeer” the evening by leaving with Trevor’s sister, Emily, to check another venue’s “vibe.” Later, Emily relayed that Hannah was upset Angelica (Jennifer’s best friend and maid of honor) didn’t go out the second night of the bachelorette, and Hannah had also told Emily she felt unwelcome around Angelica and couldn’t trust her. Jennifer saw this as Hannah being calculated and trying to find a scapegoat for her own disinterest in being close to Jennifer and Angelica.

Significant quotes: \* “I think I just started continuing to, like, put myself less and just want to make sure, like, my mom’s picked up.” \* “I wasn’t ready time the work that I had to do [in therapy].” \* Regarding wedding planning: “my family’s True Colors were coming in.” \* On derealization: “I feel like I’m here, but I’m not here, like I’m present, but I feel very foggy.” \* On suicidal thoughts: “I definitely have had, like, suicidal thoughts, but not laugh nothing. That was like, to the extreme where I was scared.” \* On setting boundaries with Hannah: “I am going to respect my boundaries, because I am the one who feels it.” \* On keeping peace: “who am I keeping peace for? Because they’re not affected… And my peace is the one that gets sacrificed every time. So I kind of was like, I’m done with that.”

## Objective

Jennifer presented for the session appearing somewhat anxious but was open and forthcoming. Her mood was predominantly dysphoric with congruent affect, though she was able to engage with humor at times. Speech was clear, coherent, and at a normal rate and volume. She maintained good eye contact and was fully oriented.

Jennifer described a history of anxiety and depression, and recently, experiences of derealization and increased OCD symptoms. She reported current suicidal ideation without acute intent or plan, noting she feels able to manage these thoughts but is uncomfortable being alone due to them. Her self-reported symptoms aligned with the results of the BAI (mild anxiety), BDI (severe depression), Perceived Stress Scale (moderate), and Quality of Life Scale (okay-ish), which were administered during the session.

She demonstrated insight into her tendency towards self-sacrifice and difficulty setting boundaries, particularly with family members. She was able to articulate the stress caused by family dynamics during her wedding planning and ongoing issues with her in-laws (specifically Hannah). She showed emerging assertiveness in her decision to set boundaries with Hannah and to communicate her needs to Trevor regarding these boundaries.

Jennifer appeared motivated for therapy and was receptive to feedback and psychoeducation regarding boundaries, requests, and limits. She engaged actively in discussing her current stressors, including her new job, ongoing derealization, depressive symptoms (low motivation, fatigue, irritability), and OCD. Her cognitive functioning appeared intact, with no evidence of psychosis or formal thought disorder. She expressed a desire to work on establishing healthier boundaries to protect her mental well-being.

## Assessment

Jennifer is experiencing a significant depressive episode, rated as severe on the BDI, which is impacting her daily functioning, motivation, and emotional regulation. This is compounded by mild anxiety (BAI) and moderate perceived stress. Her report of persistent derealization since last summer is a notable symptom, likely linked to her heightened anxiety and stress levels, creating a chronic fight-or-flight state. The suicidal ideation, while not acute or with a plan, is a serious concern and indicates the depth of her distress. Her OCD symptoms have also worsened, manifesting in repetitive, stress-inducing routines.

The primary contributing factors appear to be a combination of chronic stressors: difficult family dynamics (particularly with her mother and in-laws like Hannah), the pressure of wedding planning, a previously toxic work environment, and a longstanding pattern of self-sacrifice and difficulty setting boundaries. While she has recently changed jobs, the derealization and depressive symptoms persist, suggesting they are deeply entrenched.

Jennifer demonstrates some strengths, including insight into her patterns (e.g., self-sacrifice, people-pleasing) and a growing recognition of the need for boundaries. Her willingness to re-engage in therapy and her honesty in self-reporting are positive prognostic indicators. She has begun to experiment with boundary setting (e.g., with Hannah), which has provided some relief and a sense of agency. Her relationship with Trevor appears to be a source of support, although her increased irritability is straining this. Angelica, her best friend, also seems to be a positive support.

Risk factors include the severity of her depression, ongoing suicidal ideation (even if passive), persistent derealization, and the potential for family conflicts to escalate or undermine her efforts to establish boundaries. Her tendency to prioritize others’ needs over her own is a vulnerability that perpetuates her stress and depressive symptoms.

## Plan

1. **Address Depressive Symptoms and Suicidal Ideation:**
   * Continue to monitor suicidal ideation closely at each session. Develop a comprehensive safety plan, including coping strategies, support contacts, and emergency resources, to be reviewed and updated regularly.
   * Utilize Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques to identify and challenge negative thought patterns contributing to depression and hopelessness. Focus on behavioral activation strategies to combat low motivation and anhedonia, encouraging engagement in pleasurable and mastery-oriented activities, even on a small scale initially.
   * Explore the somatic, affective, and cognitive aspects of her depression, which are currently tied. Tailor interventions to address each component, e.g., mindfulness for somatic complaints, emotional regulation skills for affect, and cognitive restructuring for unhelpful thoughts.
2. **Manage Anxiety and Derealization:**
   * Employ psychoeducation on the nature of anxiety and derealization, explaining the fight-or-flight response and how chronic stress can lead to these experiences. Normalize her experience while emphasizing that relief is possible.
   * Teach grounding techniques (e.g., 5-4-3-2-1 sensory exercise, mindful breathing) to help Jennifer manage episodes of derealization and anchor herself in the present moment.
   * Introduce anxiety management strategies from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), such as defusion from anxious thoughts and acceptance of uncomfortable sensations, to reduce the struggle with anxiety and its manifestations.
3. **Strengthen Boundary Setting Skills:**
   * Continue to support and reinforce Jennifer’s efforts to establish and maintain boundaries, particularly with family members (mother, Hannah, and in general). Utilize the handout on limits, boundaries, and requests for psychoeducation.
   * Use Narrative Therapy approaches to help Jennifer deconstruct societal or familial narratives that promote self-sacrifice and explore alternative narratives that prioritize her well-being and self-respect.
   * Role-play difficult conversations related to boundary setting to build her confidence and skills in assertive communication.
4. **Address OCD Symptoms:**
   * Explore the function and triggers of her OCD-related routines. Introduce Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) principles as a potential intervention if appropriate and if Jennifer is willing, to gradually reduce reliance on these rituals.
5. **Enhance Self-Care and Coping Strategies:**
   * Collaboratively identify and schedule regular self-care activities that Jennifer finds restorative and enjoyable.
   * Explore existential themes related to finding meaning and purpose, which can be protective against depression and enhance quality of life.
6. **Follow-up:**
   * Schedule weekly therapy sessions to provide consistent support and work on treatment goals. Jennifer was provided with a PIN to access the client portal for self-scheduling.
   * Re-administer assessment scales (BAI, BDI, PSS, QOLS) periodically to monitor progress and adjust treatment as needed.
   * Encourage Jennifer to communicate any significant increase in distress or suicidal ideation between sessions.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

Jennifer’s session was marked by several distinct tonal shifts, reflecting her emotional journey as she recounted her experiences and re-engaged with the therapeutic process.

1. **Initial Apprehension and Relief:** The session began with a tone of slight apprehension mixed with relief. Jennifer thanked me for “taking me back,” indicating some nervousness about returning. However, as I reassured her that all was forgiven and the goal was to move forward, her tone shifted to one of greater ease and openness, ready to explain her absence.
2. **Self-Critical and Explanatory:** When discussing why she discontinued therapy, Jennifer’s tone was self-critical (“I started feeling myself, not feeling like I was ready to, like, put boundaries of other people”) and explanatory. She was trying to articulate her internal state and the external pressures (e.g., picking up her mom) that led to her feeling overwhelmed and unable to commit to the therapeutic work.
3. **Stressed and Overwhelmed:** Recounting the wedding planning, her mother’s behavior (“my family’s True Colors were coming in,” mother threatening not to come), and the pressures from her previous job (“insane,” “spinning in like this, like tornado”), Jennifer’s tone became audibly stressed and overwhelmed. This reflected the significant emotional toll these experiences had taken on her.
4. **Concerned and Confused (Derealization):** When describing her experiences of derealization (“I feel like I’m here, but I’m not here…very foggy”), her tone shifted to one of concern and confusion. She was trying to make sense of this disquieting symptom that had been present since the previous summer. There was a questioning quality to her voice as she sought to understand it.
5. **Vulnerable and Somber (Suicidal Thoughts & Depression):** Discussing her lack of motivation, fatigue, and suicidal thoughts (“dance closer to the idea of not wanting to be here”), Jennifer’s tone became more vulnerable and somber. While she stated the thoughts weren’t extreme enough to scare her, the admission itself, and her nervousness about being alone, carried a weight of seriousness and sadness.
6. **Engaged and Reflective (Assessment Results & Boundary Setting):** When discussing the results of the assessment scales and the topic of boundaries, Jennifer’s tone became more engaged and reflective. She agreed with the accuracy of the results and readily identified boundary setting as a key area to work on. Recounting the incident with Hannah and the yoga plans, her tone showed a mix of past frustration but also a new resolve (“I am done right there,” “I am going to respect my boundaries”). This indicated a shift towards empowerment.
7. **Assertive and Resolute (Family Dynamics):** As she detailed the manipulative dynamics with Hannah and her decision to no longer sacrifice her peace for others, her tone grew more assertive and resolute. Her statement, “who am I keeping peace for? Because they’re not affected… And my peace is the one that gets sacrificed every time. So I kind of was like, I’m done with that,” was delivered with conviction.

### Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged from Jennifer’s session, highlighting her current struggles and areas for therapeutic focus.

1. **Self-Sacrifice and People-Pleasing:** This is a deeply ingrained pattern for Jennifer, evident in her initial reasons for leaving therapy (prioritizing her mom’s needs), her stress during wedding planning (trying to meet everyone’s expectations), and her historical tendency to put others before herself. This theme is directly linked to her difficulty setting boundaries.
   * *Quote Example 1:* “I think I just started continuing to, like, put myself less and just want to make sure, like, my mom’s picked up.”
   * *Quote Example 2:* (Regarding wedding stress) “I was just trying to meet everyone else’s expectations.”
2. **The Struggle for Boundaries:** A central theme is Jennifer’s difficulty in establishing and maintaining personal boundaries, particularly with family members (her mother, her in-laws like Hannah). She is beginning to recognize the cost of this (sacrificing her peace) and is starting to experiment with asserting her needs.
   * *Quote Example 1:* “I wasn’t ready time the work that I had to do [in therapy, referring to boundary setting].”
   * *Quote Example 2:* “I am going to respect my boundaries, because I am the one who feels it.”
3. **Derealization and Disconnection:** Jennifer’s persistent feeling of derealization (“like I’m here, but I’m not here,” “foggy”) is a significant theme, representing a disconnection from herself and her environment. This is likely a manifestation of chronic anxiety and stress, serving as a maladaptive coping mechanism.
   * *Quote Example 1:* “I feel very foggy.”
   * *Quote Example 2:* “It’s almost like I’m kind of drunk, but I’m not.”
4. **Depression and Suicidal Ideation:** The severity of Jennifer’s depressive symptoms (low motivation, fatigue, irritability, sadness) and the presence of suicidal thoughts, even if not acute, are critical themes. These indicate a significant level of emotional pain and a need for immediate therapeutic attention.
   * *Quote Example 1:* “I definitely have had, like, suicidal thoughts, but not laugh nothing. That was like, to the extreme where I was scared.”
   * *Quote Example 2:* (Describing her current state) “I’m just so tired… I’m just upset.”
5. **Impact of Family Dynamics on Mental Health:** The session highlighted how stressful family dynamics, including her mother’s behavior during wedding planning and the manipulative actions of her sister-in-law Hannah, significantly contribute to Jennifer’s anxiety, depression, and difficulty maintaining her well-being.
   * *Quote Example 1:* (Mother threatening not to come to wedding) “That was like a whole other thing that was just like, weighing on me.”
   * *Quote Example 2:* (Regarding Hannah) “She’s very calculated… she’s trying to find a scapegoat.”

These themes are interconnected, with Jennifer’s tendency towards self-sacrifice and difficulty with boundaries exacerbating her stress, which in turn fuels her anxiety, depression, and derealization. Addressing these themes holistically will be crucial for her therapeutic progress.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Jennifer expressed a mix of **self-criticism** (“I wasn’t ready to do the work”) and **emerging self-awareness and resolve** (“I am going to respect my boundaries”). There was a strong undercurrent of **distress, fatigue, and feeling overwhelmed** (“I’m just so tired… I’m just upset,” feeling “foggy”). Her sentiments about her suicidal thoughts were complex: **acknowledgment without immediate fear**, but also **nervousness** about being alone with them.

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Mother:** Sentiments of **stress, frustration, and feeling pressured** (“my family’s True Colors were coming in,” mother threatening not to come to the wedding). There’s a sense of being burdened by her mother’s expectations. \* **Trevor (Husband):** Generally positive, implied as supportive (taking on household tasks), but also a target for her increased **irritability**. \* **Hannah (Sister-in-law):** Predominantly **frustration, annoyance, and a sense of being manipulated** (“she’s very calculated,” trying to “commandeer” events). Jennifer expressed a clear decision to create distance. \* **Previous Job:** Strong **negative sentiment** (“insane,” contributing to feeling like a “tornado”). \* **Wedding Planning:** Overwhelmingly **stressful and negative**, a period where she felt immense pressure.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Jennifer expressed **gratitude and relief** at being ableto return to therapy (“thank you for taking me back”). She was **open and engaged**, willing to discuss difficult topics and her assessment results, indicating a **positive sentiment towards the process** and a hope for support and change.

**Sentiment Shifts:** Jennifer’s sentiments shifted throughout the session. She began with **apprehension and self-blame** regarding her previous therapy discontinuation. This shifted to **overwhelm and stress** when discussing past and current stressors (wedding, job, derealization). When discussing her suicidal thoughts, her sentiment became more **somber and vulnerable**. However, when the topic moved to boundaries, particularly with Hannah, her sentiment shifted towards **resolve, assertiveness, and a degree of empowerment**, even if tinged with past frustration. Her engagement with the assessment results was **reflective and accepting**.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor’s) primary sentiment was empathy for Jennifer’s distress and the significant stressors she has been navigating. There was a sense of validation for her feelings of being overwhelmed and her desire for boundaries. I felt encouraged by her willingness to re-engage and her emerging assertiveness. A potential countertransference could be to push too quickly on boundary setting if Jennifer shows ambivalence, or to over-identify with her frustrations with family members. It was important to maintain a balanced perspective, supporting her agency while also acknowledging the complexities of family dynamics and the gradual nature of change. The focus was on creating a safe space for her to explore these difficult emotions and to collaboratively build coping strategies and a path towards improved well-being.

### Key Points

* **Return to Therapy & Severe Depressive Symptoms:** Jennifer has returned to therapy after a hiatus, currently experiencing severe depressive symptoms (BDI), mild anxiety (BAI), moderate perceived stress, persistent derealization, and suicidal ideation (without acute plan).
  + *Relevance:* This highlights the urgency of addressing her current mental health crisis, focusing on safety, symptom reduction, and functional improvement.
* **Boundary Setting as a Core Issue:** A primary reason for her previous therapy discontinuation and a current major focus is her difficulty establishing and maintaining boundaries, particularly with family members, leading to self-sacrifice and increased stress.
  + *Relevance:* Developing and implementing healthy boundaries is crucial for Jennifer to protect her peace, reduce stress, and improve her overall well-being and sense of agency.
* **Impact of Multiple Life Stressors:** Jennifer has navigated significant recent stressors including moving, marriage, intense wedding planning with family conflict, and a toxic previous job, all contributing to her current mental state.
  + *Relevance:* Understanding the cumulative impact of these stressors is key to formulating a comprehensive treatment plan that addresses both current symptoms and underlying vulnerabilities.

### Significant Quotes

* “I feel like I’m here, but I’m not here, like I’m present, but I feel very foggy.”
  + *Context:* Jennifer describing her persistent feeling of derealization.
  + *Significance:* This quote vividly captures the disquieting and constant nature of her derealization, a key symptom linked to her anxiety and stress, significantly impacting her daily experience and sense of self.
* “I definitely have had, like, suicidal thoughts, but not laugh nothing. That was like, to the extreme where I was scared.”
  + *Context:* Jennifer disclosing her experience with suicidal ideation.
  + *Significance:* This highlights the seriousness of her depressive state. While she downplays immediate fear, the presence of these thoughts, especially her nervousness when alone, necessitates careful monitoring and safety planning.
* “who am I keeping peace for? Because they’re not affected… And my peace is the one that gets sacrificed every time. So I kind of was like, I’m done with that.”
  + *Context:* Jennifer reflecting on her decision to set boundaries and no longer prioritize others’ comfort at the expense of her own well-being.
  + *Significance:* This quote demonstrates a significant shift in Jennifer’s thinking and a growing sense of empowerment. It signals her readiness to challenge her people-pleasing patterns and prioritize her own mental health, a crucial step in her recovery.
* “I am going to respect my boundaries, because I am the one who feels it.”
  + *Context:* Jennifer stating her commitment to maintaining boundaries with Hannah, even if Trevor doesn’t.
  + *Significance:* This shows her increasing internal locus of control and her understanding that she is responsible for her own emotional well-being. It’s a powerful statement of intent regarding her therapeutic goal of boundary setting.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Jennifer McNally re-engaged in therapy on May 8, 2025, reporting significant distress characterized by severe depressive symptoms, mild anxiety, persistent derealization, increased OCD symptoms, and suicidal ideation without acute intent. She attributed her previous discontinuation of therapy to feeling unready to establish boundaries and being overwhelmed by self-sacrificing behaviors. Since then, she has experienced major life stressors, including moving in with her partner Trevor, getting married amidst significant family conflict during wedding planning (particularly with her mother and mother-in-law), and enduring a toxic previous work environment. She recently started a new job.

Jennifer described her derealization as a constant foggy feeling, like being drunk while sober, which began the previous summer and is linked to anxiety. Her depressive symptoms include low motivation, fatigue, increased irritability (especially towards Trevor), and sadness. She acknowledged her suicidal thoughts make her nervous when alone. Assessment scales administered (BAI, BDI, PSS, QOLS) confirmed her self-report. Jennifer identified boundary setting, particularly with family, as a primary therapeutic goal. She recounted recent success in setting boundaries with

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Nico Luppino's Therapy Session on May 8, 2025

## Subjective

Nico began the session on May 8, 2025, discussing workplace stressors, specifically a difficult female colleague whose behavior he likened to his partner Hassan's at times, describing her as “dramatic” and making nonsensical requests. However, he finds it easier to deal with her than Hassan because he doesn't take her behavior as personally, as she treats everyone similarly. He noted his mother also dislikes this colleague.

The primary focus of the session quickly shifted to his relationship with his partner, Hassan. Nico reported ongoing communication issues and conflicts that often spoil otherwise good days, particularly in the last 30-45 minutes before bed. He recounted several recent incidents:

1. **Cold Hands Incident:** One night, after getting up to use the bathroom, Nico returned to bed. Hassan, anticipating Nico might touch him with cold hands (a known sensitivity for both Hassan and his cousin), screamed as Nico moved closer, even before Nico touched him. Nico felt his hands were room temperature and was upset by Hassan's reaction, which affected him into the next day.
2. **Columbia Trip Planning Conflict:** Last night, while planning a trip to Colombia, tension arose. Nico expressed upset about the timing (early July, leaving the day after his birthday) as he likely can't take 10-12 days off. He prefers to go for the first part of the trip to experience the newness and exploration with Hassan, fearing that if he joins later, Hassan's cousin will control everything and many experiences will no longer be novel or shared. He felt Hassan wasn't understanding his perspective. The argument escalated when Nico sighed and said, “I'm not arguing anymore,” which “set him off.” Hassan threw his hands up, said he couldn't believe Nico thought that (presumably that Hassan wanted to fight), and went to bed wanting to be alone. Nico stayed up anxious and upset.
3. **Masturbation Incident:** On another recent night, after a period of cuddling and kissing which escalated Nico's horniness, he wanted to masturbate. Hassan became upset and asked Nico to go to the living room, stating it would be “awkward.” Nico felt hurt and “kicked out of the bed,” especially since he perceives Hassan gets his sexual needs met more readily. He was no longer horny and just felt upset.
4. **Dirty Hands Incident:** The day after the masturbation incident, Nico was still upset and tired. At dinner, Hassan noted Nico's hands were dirty from his new car repair job and asked him to clean them. When Nico explained they wouldn't get perfectly clean due to the nature of the job, Hassan went into “automatic solution mode,” which frustrated Nico as he had previously discussed with Hassan (based on therapist Dan's advice) not to be an automatic solution-giver. Nico wanted to discuss his feelings about the previous night's masturbation incident, but Hassan kept reverting to the topic of his nails. Nico eventually gave up, cleaned the dinner table, and took a shower, feeling sad.

Nico noted that many of their fights coincide with Hassan's interactions or fights with his cousin. He feels a dynamic where good days are often ruined by these end-of-day conflicts. He expressed a desire to tell Hassan about the cousin's influence but fears Hassan's reaction.

Nico also touched upon trust issues, questioning why they haven't exchanged house keys, which he perceives as a trust issue from Hassan's side, despite being able to let himself into the garage. He feels that while he generally trusts Hassan, he sometimes interrogates him to ensure trust isn't broken, and is okay with being lied to occasionally if it doesn't hurt his feelings and he doesn't know about it, but if he knows, he'll be upset. He recounted an incident where Hassan went to a bar (the Shed) with his cousin where a bartender Nico had a crush on works. Nico got upset in his head, fearing the cousin would try to get the bartender's Instagram, linking it to past instances of the cousin friending Grindr contacts on social media, which grosses Nico out. Hassan got upset by Nico's perceived upset, even though Nico tried to downplay it.

Nico expressed a strong desire to improve communication to

fix their recurring conflicts, which he feels stem from communication issues with himself and Hassan, and are often exacerbated by Hassan's cousin. He mentioned Hassan had suggested couples therapy but Nico believes Hassan would resent spending money on it.

Significant quotes: \* On his colleague: “actually seems very similar to dealing with Hassan in some way. Oh, is she dramatic? Is she dramatic? And telling me to do things that don't make sense sometimes.” \* On Hassan screaming about cold hands: “he, like, assumed I was going to touch his body first. And yeah so. And then I I got upset, and I was like, I don't know why you're why you did that.” \* On the Columbia trip argument: “I felt like the argument itself was stupid. And I took a big sigh, and I sat back in the couch, and I'm like, I'm not arguing anymore. And that set him off, that that absolutely set him off.” \* On being asked to masturbate in the living room: “to feel like kicked out of the bed by my boyfriend because I wanted to jerk off, felt really bad. He said awkward or something, that was the word used.” \* On Hassan's cousin's influence: “I noticed that, like a lot of our fights coincide with his cousin.” \* On trust and keys: “I would like to know why we haven't exchanged keys… it just feels like a trust thing.” \* On communication: “I really just want to know how to communicate better, to fix it, because I feel like it's like a communication issue with myself.”

## Objective

Nico presented for the session appearing somewhat distressed and frustrated, particularly when discussing his relationship with Hassan. His mood was predominantly dysphoric with a congruent affect, though he was able to articulate his concerns clearly and coherently. Speech was at a normal rate and volume. He maintained good eye contact and was fully oriented.

Nico described a pattern of recurring conflicts with his partner, Hassan, often escalating from minor incidents (e.g., cold hands, planning details) and frequently occurring at the end of the day. He reported feeling misunderstood, dismissed (e.g., his desire to masturbate being labeled “awkward” and him being asked to leave the room), and frustrated by Hassan's reactions (e.g., getting “set off” when Nico disengaged from an argument, Hassan's focus on solutions rather than listening).

He demonstrated insight into some relational dynamics, such as the negative influence of Hassan's cousin on their arguments and his own difficulty in communicating his needs effectively without triggering defensiveness in Hassan. He also acknowledged his own reactions, such as getting upset and anxious when conflicts arise before bedtime.

Nico expressed a desire for improved communication and conflict resolution skills. He appeared to be struggling with feelings of shame (“I am bad because I am financially unstable, and I impact their vibe… I feel bad for that, so that I now, I feel guilty and now and then also embarrassed”), which I (the therapist) reframed from a trust issue. He was receptive to this reframing. There was no evidence of psychosis, formal thought disorder, or acute risk of harm to self or others.

## Assessment

Nico is experiencing significant relational distress with his partner, Hassan, characterized by frequent arguments, communication breakdowns, and unresolved conflicts. These issues appear to be exacerbated by external factors (e.g., Hassan's cousin's involvement, workplace stress for Nico) and internal dynamics (e.g., Nico's feelings of shame and financial insecurity, Hassan's sensitivity and potential shame spirals).

The recurring pattern of good days being ruined by end-of-day conflicts suggests underlying tensions and difficulties in emotional regulation and communication for both partners. Nico's perception that Hassan often doesn't listen or jumps to solutions, and Hassan's tendency to get “set off” or withdraw, points to a cycle of negative interaction where both partners likely feel unheard and invalidated.

Nico's core issue seems to revolve around feelings of shame (“I am bad”) related to financial instability and a fear of negatively impacting Hassan's experiences. This shame likely fuels his anxiety in conflict and may contribute to his difficulty asserting his needs in a way that Hassan can hear without becoming defensive. The therapist conceptualizes that both Nico's and Hassan's shame spirals reverberate off each other, creating a negative feedback loop.

Nico shows some strengths, including his motivation to improve the relationship, his willingness to examine his own role in the conflicts, and his insight into some of the problematic dynamics (e.g., the cousin's influence). His desire to communicate better “with myself” first is a positive step. However, the lack of effective conflict resolution strategies and the pervasive influence of shame are significant vulnerabilities for the relationship.

The issue of not exchanging house keys, while a practical inconvenience, also symbolizes a potential lack of deeper trust or full integration as a couple, which Nico perceives.

## Plan

1. \*\*Enhance Self-Awareness and Shame Resilience (ACT & Narrative Therapy):
   * Continue to explore Nico's feelings of shame (“I am bad”) and their origins, particularly in relation to financial insecurity and perceived impact on Hassan. Utilize Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles to help Nico defuse from shame-based thoughts and connect with his values.
   * Use Narrative Therapy techniques to deconstruct the

shame-laden narratives and co-construct alternative, more empowering stories about his worth and capabilities. \* Practice mindfulness and self-compassion exercises to help Nico manage difficult emotions and thoughts related to shame without judgment.

1. \*\*Improve Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills (DBT & Existential Therapy):
   * Teach Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) interpersonal effectiveness skills (e.g., DEAR MAN, GIVE, FAST) to help Nico communicate his needs, feelings, and boundaries to Hassan more effectively and assertively, while maintaining self-respect and respect for the relationship.
   * Explore existential themes of choice, responsibility, and meaning in relationships. Help Nico clarify what he truly wants and needs in his relationship with Hassan and take responsible action towards creating that.
   * Practice active listening skills and validation techniques for Nico to use with Hassan, and to request from Hassan, to break the cycle of feeling unheard.
   * Work on identifying escalating conflict patterns and implementing de-escalation strategies (e.g., taking a timeout, using “I” statements, focusing on the present issue).
2. \*\*Address the Impact of External Stressors (Hassan's Cousin, Workplace):
   * Develop strategies for Nico to manage the impact of Hassan's cousin on their relationship. This may involve discussing boundaries with Hassan regarding his cousin's involvement or influence on their conflicts.
   * Explore coping mechanisms for workplace stress to reduce its spillover into his personal life and relationship.
3. \*\*Explore Trust and Intimacy Issues:
   * Revisit the topic of exchanging house keys as a concrete step that could symbolize increased trust and commitment, if both partners are willing.
   * Address the dynamics around sexual intimacy, including Nico's feelings about the masturbation incident, to foster open communication and mutual respect for each other's needs and boundaries in this area.
4. \*\*Follow-up:
   * Continue weekly therapy sessions to work on these goals.
   * Encourage Nico to practice new communication and coping skills between sessions and report back on his experiences.
   * Periodically review progress and adjust the treatment plan as needed.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

Nico's session on May 8, 2025, featured several notable tonal shifts as he navigated through various relational frustrations and personal reflections.

1. **Initial Frustration and Resignation (Workplace/Hassan Comparison):** The session began with a tone of mild frustration mixed with a hint of resignation as Nico described his difficult colleague. When comparing her to Hassan (“actually seems very similar to dealing with Hassan”), there was a weariness in his voice, suggesting a recurring pattern of dealing with challenging personalities.
2. **Agitated and Hurt (Recounting Conflicts):** As Nico detailed the specific incidents with Hassan (cold hands, masturbation request, dirty hands), his tone became more agitated, hurt, and exasperated. Phrases like “he, like, assumed I was going to touch his body first” and “to feel like kicked out of the bed by my boyfriend…felt really bad” were delivered with a clear sense of injury and disbelief.
3. **Anxious and Defensive (Columbia Trip Argument):** When discussing the argument about the Columbia trip and his attempt to disengage (“I'm not arguing anymore”), which then “set him off,” Nico's tone conveyed anxiety about Hassan's reactions and a defensive posture, as if anticipating blame or misunderstanding.
4. **Reflective and Questioning (Trust and Keys):** When pondering the issue of not having exchanged house keys (“I would like to know why we haven't exchanged keys…it just feels like a trust thing”), his tone shifted to a more reflective and questioning quality. There was a sense of vulnerability and a desire for deeper understanding and commitment.
5. **Confused and Seeking Validation (Shame vs. Trust):** During the therapist's reframing of his issues from trust to shame, Nico's tone became somewhat confused but also receptive (“Sounds like it makes sense”). He was grappling with a new perspective on his internal experience and its impact on the relationship.
6. **Earnest and Pleading (Desire for Better Communication):** Towards the end, when expressing his core desire (“I really just want to know how to communicate better, to fix it”), his tone was earnest and almost pleading, highlighting his deep wish for resolution and a more harmonious relationship.
7. **Slightly Cynical/Resigned (Couples Therapy):** When mentioning Hassan's suggestion of couples therapy, Nico's follow-up comment (“I'd really believe that he was thinking he would be like, resentful for, like, spending money on that anyway. It's stupid. So okay, there's no point”) carried a tone of cynicism and resignation, suggesting a lack of faith in that particular solution due to perceived financial concerns from Hassan.

These tonal shifts illustrate Nico's emotional rollercoaster within the relationship, moving between frustration, hurt, anxiety, reflection, and a deep-seated desire for connection and improvement, all underscored by an emerging understanding of his own shame.

### Thematic Analysis

Several significant themes emerged during Nico's session, painting a picture of his relational struggles and internal conflicts.

1. **Communication Breakdown and Misunderstanding:** This was the most prominent theme, with Nico repeatedly describing instances where attempts to communicate feelings or resolve issues with Hassan led to further conflict or emotional distress.
   * Examples: The argument over the Columbia trip escalating after Nico tried to disengage; Hassan focusing on solutions (dirty hands) when Nico wanted to discuss feelings about a previous incident.
   * Quote: “I really just want to know how to communicate better, to fix it, because I feel like it's like a communication issue with myself.”
   * Connection: This theme is central to their ongoing relational distress, creating a cycle of negative interactions where both partners likely feel unheard and invalidated.
2. **Shame and Insecurity:** The therapist identified shame, particularly related to Nico's financial instability and fear of being a burden (“I am bad because I am financially unstable, and I impact their vibe”), as a core underlying issue. This shame appears to fuel his anxiety and defensiveness in conflicts.
   * Example: Nico feeling guilty and embarrassed about his financial situation impacting Hassan.
   * Connection: This internal shame likely makes Nico more sensitive to perceived criticism or rejection from Hassan, contributing to the intensity of their arguments.
3. **External Influences and Triangulation (Hassan's Cousin):** Nico perceives Hassan's cousin as a negative influence on their relationship, noting that many of their fights coincide with Hassan's interactions with his cousin. This suggests a potential triangulation dynamic where the cousin exacerbates existing tensions.
   * Example: Nico fearing the cousin would try to get the bartender's Instagram, linking it to past behaviors.
   * Quote: “I noticed that, like a lot of our fights coincide with his cousin.”
   * Connection: This external factor adds another layer of complexity and stress to Nico and Hassan's relationship, making it harder for them to resolve issues directly.
4. **Unmet Needs and Emotional Invalidation:** Nico frequently expressed feeling that his emotional needs were not being met or were being dismissed by Hassan. This was evident in the masturbation incident (“to feel like kicked out of the bed…felt really bad”) and when Hassan focused on solutions instead of listening to Nico's feelings.
   * Example: Hassan asking Nico to go to the living room to masturbate because it would be “awkward.”
   * Connection: Repeated experiences of emotional invalidation can erode trust and intimacy, leading to resentment and further communication breakdowns.
5. **Desire for Connection and Fear of Conflict:** Despite the frequent arguments, Nico expressed a strong desire for a better relationship and improved communication. However, there also seemed to be a fear of conflict or Hassan's reactions, leading him to sometimes avoid expressing his true feelings or to disengage in ways that inadvertently escalate the situation.
   * Example: Nico wanting to tell Hassan about the cousin's influence but fearing his reaction; Nico sighing and saying “I'm not arguing anymore,” which then upset Hassan.
   * Connection: This ambivalence—wanting closeness but fearing the conflict required to achieve it—is a common dynamic in distressed relationships.

These themes are interconnected, with communication breakdowns often stemming from underlying shame and insecurity, exacerbated by external influences, and leading to unmet needs and a cycle of conflict that Nico desperately wants to break.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Nico expressed significant **frustration** with his inability to communicate effectively (“I feel like it's like a communication issue with myself”). A core sentiment was **shame and guilt**, particularly regarding his financial situation and its perceived impact on Hassan (“I am bad because I am financially unstable, and I impact their vibe… I feel bad for that, so that I now, I feel guilty and now and then also embarrassed”). He also felt **hurt and rejected** in specific interactions (e.g., being asked to leave the bed to masturbate).

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Hassan (Partner):** A complex mix of **love/desire for connection** and significant **frustration, hurt, and feeling misunderstood**. Nico perceived Hassan as sometimes being **insensitive, dismissive, or quick to anger** (“that set him off”). He also felt Hassan didn't always listen or understand his perspective. \* **Hassan's Cousin:** Predominantly **negative sentiment**, viewing the cousin as a **disruptive influence** on his relationship with Hassan (“a lot of our fights coincide with his cousin,” “grosses me out” regarding friending Grindr contacts). \* **Workplace Colleague:** **Annoyance and frustration**, but with a degree of detachment as he doesn't take her behavior personally.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Nico appeared to view therapy as a place to **seek solutions and understanding** (“I really just want to know how to communicate better, to fix it”). He was **receptive to the therapist's reframing** of his trust issues as shame-related (“Sounds like it makes sense”), indicating a **willingness to engage and explore** new perspectives. His tone suggested he was **hopeful, yet somewhat desperate** for tools to improve his relationship.

**Sentiment Shifts:** Nico began with a tone of **weary frustration** when discussing his colleague and comparing her to Hassan. This shifted to more **acute agitation and hurt** as he recounted specific conflicts with Hassan. When discussing the trust/keys issue and the therapist's reframing to shame, his sentiment became more **reflective and questioning, then receptive**. His strongest sentiment, expressed with **earnestness and a hint of desperation**, was his desire for better communication. There was a brief shift to **cynicism/resignation** when discussing the financial aspect of couples therapy.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor's) primary sentiment was empathy for Nico's distress and his clear desire for a healthier relationship. I felt a sense of validation for his feelings of being misunderstood and hurt in his interactions with Hassan. There was also a recognition of the courage it took for him to explore his feelings of shame. A potential countertransference could be to over-identify with Nico's frustration with Hassan or to offer solutions too quickly, mirroring the dynamic he experiences with Hassan. It was important to maintain a neutral, supportive stance, focusing on helping Nico understand his own internal processes (like shame) and develop his own communication skills, rather than taking sides or becoming an “automatic solution-giver.” The aim was to empower Nico to navigate his relationship more effectively from a place of greater self-awareness and compassion.

### Key Points

* **Recurring Relational Conflict and Communication Breakdown:** Nico and his partner, Hassan, experience frequent arguments, often at the end of the day, stemming from misunderstandings, unmet needs, and ineffective communication patterns.
  + *Relevance:* This is the primary presenting problem causing Nico significant distress and impacting the relationship quality. Improving communication and conflict resolution is a central therapy goal.
* **Underlying Shame and Insecurity:** Nico experiences significant shame related to his financial instability and fears being a burden or negatively impacting Hassan, which likely fuels his anxiety and defensive reactions in conflicts.
  + *Relevance:* Addressing this core shame is crucial for Nico to build self-compassion, reduce defensiveness, and engage more authentically in the relationship.
* **Negative External Influence (Hassan's Cousin):** Nico perceives Hassan's cousin as a significant negative influence, with many of their arguments coinciding with Hassan's interactions with his cousin.
  + *Relevance:* This highlights the need to explore boundary setting within the relationship concerning external parties and to manage the impact of triangulation on their dynamic.

### Significant Quotes

* “I felt like the argument itself was stupid. And I took a big sigh, and I sat back in the couch, and I'm like, I'm not arguing anymore. And that set him off, that that absolutely set him off.”
  + *Context:* Nico describing an argument with Hassan about planning a trip to Colombia.
  + *Significance:* This quote illustrates a common dysfunctional communication pattern where Nico's attempt to disengage (perhaps to avoid further conflict or due to frustration) is perceived negatively by Hassan and escalates the argument, leaving Nico feeling anxious and misunderstood.
* “to feel like kicked out of the bed by my boyfriend because I wanted to jerk off, felt really bad. He said awkward or something, that was the word used.”
  + *Context:* Nico recounting an incident where Hassan asked him to go to the living room to masturbate.
  + *Significance:* This highlights Nico's feelings of rejection, hurt, and invalidation regarding his sexual needs and desires. It points to difficulties in communicating about intimacy and respecting individual needs within the relationship.
* “I am bad because I am financially unstable, and I impact their vibe… I feel bad for that, so that I now, I feel guilty and now and then also embarrassed.”
  + *Context:* Nico reflecting on his feelings, which the therapist reframed from a trust issue to one of shame.
  + *Significance:* This is a powerful articulation of Nico's core shame. It reveals a deep-seated negative self-belief linked to his financial situation, which significantly impacts his emotional state and likely his interactions within the relationship.
* “I really just want to know how to communicate better, to fix it, because I feel like it's like a communication issue with myself.”
  + *Context:* Nico expressing his primary goal for therapy.
  + *Significance:* This quote underscores Nico's motivation for change and his insight that improving his own communication is key. It shows a willingness to take responsibility and actively work on the relationship dynamics.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Nico Luppino attended his therapy session on May 8, 2025, primarily focused on ongoing and distressing conflicts with his partner, Hassan. He described a pattern of good days being spoiled by arguments that typically occur in the evening, often stemming from seemingly minor incidents that escalate due to communication breakdowns. Nico recounted several recent examples, including Hassan overreacting to the possibility of Nico touching him with cold hands, a tense argument about planning a trip to Colombia where Nico felt his preferences were dismissed, an incident where Hassan asked him to masturbate in the living room because it would be “awkward,” making Nico feel rejected, and another where Hassan focused on Nico having dirty hands from work instead of discussing Nico's feelings about the previous night.

Nico expressed feeling frequently misunderstood, unheard, and frustrated by Hassan's tendency to react defensively or offer solutions instead of listening. He noted that many of their fights seem to coincide with Hassan's interactions with his cousin, whom Nico perceives as a negative influence. Nico also touched on underlying trust issues, symbolized by not having exchanged house keys, and his own feelings of shame related to financial instability, which he fears makes him a burden. He articulated a strong desire to improve his communication skills to resolve these recurring conflicts, acknowledging his own role in the dynamic. The therapist helped Nico begin to reframe some of his relational anxieties, particularly around trust, as stemming from deeper feelings of shame. The session aimed to validate Nico's experiences and begin exploring strategies for shame resilience and more effective interpersonal communication within his relationship with Hassan.

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Nick Dabreu's Therapy Session on May 8, 2025

## Subjective

Nick presented to the session reporting that the week had felt like a “blur” and had gone by quickly, which he viewed positively as it indicated being busy. He shared good news: the tenants in his fiancée Kristen’s parents' basement are closing on their own house next Tuesday, meaning Nick and Kristen will be able to move into the basement apartment then. This will provide them with more space and privacy than their current arrangement of living directly with Kristen's parents, which Nick described as generally “fine” given his long work hours (leaving at 6 am, returning at 8:30 pm) limit direct interaction. He humorously noted he doesn't engage in extensive conversations with Kristen's parents, quipping about not discussing their “401K” or the “new Pope.” Nick mentioned Kristen finds the current living situation more challenging due to her nursing schedule (three days on, four off), leaving her at home more often, sometimes babysitting her sister's child, which can be exhausting.

Reflecting on the previous session, Nick recalled discussing his attachment style, which he identified as avoidant, and Kristen's, which she self-identified as secure. Nick expressed some skepticism about Kristen's self-assessment, especially when she based it solely on her current feelings in their relationship rather than a global perspective. He humorously recounted telling her, “we're just gonna treat you like you're anxious,” and that she had guessed his avoidant style correctly based on his tendency to “walk away from things and try to push people away sometimes.” Nick expressed a desire to further explore his avoidant attachment style and its origins, particularly in relation to his father. He also mentioned sending the attachment style quiz to his twin brother, Matt, curious about his results.

Nick shared that he and his twin brother Matt are very similar in mannerisms, to the point Kristen says they “drive me nuts because you're the same person.” He described an amusing incident at Matt's new house in Huntington involving carpenter bees, where Matt became fixated on the bees and potential termite issues, much to Nick's desire for him to relax and enjoy some wine.

The session also involved Nick completing several assessments: the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and a Quality of Life inventory. He reported his BDI score for the past week would be low (around 3) due to positive current circumstances like no rent and food being provided, but would be higher if considering the past month. His PSS score was moderate, and Quality of Life was rated at 59%, also moderate. He attributed the moderate quality of life to a lack of social interaction with his best friends, John and Richie, whom he hasn't seen in two months, leading to a realization that he might only see them about six times a year, which he finds disheartening. He contrasted this with Kristen, who sees her close-knit group of friends (all with multiple children) almost weekly.

Nick also completed a “bullseye” values clarification exercise, identifying areas of his life and how aligned his current actions are with his values in those areas. He identified his “defined niche” or area of joy as coding and ethical hacking, which is unrelated to his current work.

Key topics discussed: \* **Living Situation and Upcoming Move:** Nick reported feeling generally content with the temporary living arrangement with Kristen's parents due to minimal interaction and cost savings, but looked forward to moving into the basement apartment for more privacy and space, especially for Kristen's well-being. \* *Quote:* (Regarding living with parents) “Nick couldn’t care less. And it’s truly, I couldn’t care less… I love her parents, and I’m not there. We’re saving money on rent.” \* **Attachment Styles:** Continued exploration of his avoidant attachment style and Kristen's self-assessed secure style. Discussion of the intergenerational transmission of attachment styles from his father. \* *Quote:* (On Kristen's secure attachment score) “I was like, Okay, girl, you lie to yourself… As soon as I saw, as soon as I was like, oh, Mercy Me, yeah, those numbers be lying.” \* **Assessments (BAI, BDI, PSS, Quality of Life, Values Bullseye):** Nick completed several assessments, revealing low current depression and anxiety, moderate stress, and moderate quality of life satisfaction. The results indicated his depression, when present, manifests more somatically and affectively rather than cognitively (ruminating). \* *Quote:* (On BDI score) “if we're talking the last week, then yes, that would be a three. If you did it over the last month, then you'd be significantly higher.” \* **Anger Manifestation:** Nick described his anger manifesting physically, primarily in his head (feeling hot, tense, pulsing) and with a strong urge to hit inanimate objects, a pattern he's had his whole life. \* *Quote:* “when I get angry, I the urge, and it scares the crap out of and I've done it my whole life to not people, hit things, not people, not people, but like at my worst fight with Chris and Lee, I punched them all. You know, I have a strong desire, yeah, to fucking just bash things and bash hard things, to never do on a pillow.” \* **Work-Life Balance and Social Connection:** Nick expressed concern about his lack of social interaction with close friends due to work, impacting his quality of life. \* *Quote:* “the biggest thing with quality life is more so enjoying social interactions more than working and that like that work life balance, where it's like my two best friends, John and Richie, it's like, I haven't seen them in two months.”

## Objective

Nick arrived on time for his in-person session, appearing casually dressed and in good spirits. His mood was generally euthymic with appropriate affect, displaying humor and engagement throughout the session. He spoke articulately and coherently, with a normal rate and rhythm of speech. He actively participated in the discussion and the completion of several psychological assessments (BAI, BDI, PSS, Quality of Life, Values Bullseye exercise).

During the discussion of his living situation, Nick maintained a relaxed and somewhat detached demeanor, indicating his current coping mechanism of minimizing interaction with Kristen's parents due to his work schedule. When discussing attachment styles, particularly Kristen's self-assessment, he was animated and humorous, using playful sarcasm. His heart rate variability, as reported by his wearable device at the start of the session, was “above the usual,” which he interpreted as his stress level being “great” and feeling “calm, cool, collected,” a message he stated he'd never received before from the device.

When discussing his anger, Nick’s tone became more serious and reflective. He described physical manifestations of anger (head tension, heat) and a strong urge to hit inanimate objects, which he acknowledged has been a lifelong pattern. There was no observed psychomotor agitation during this discussion, but his description indicated a significant internal experience of physical arousal when angered.

Nick engaged thoughtfully with the assessments. When discussing his BDI results, he differentiated between his current state (low depression) and how he might have scored over a longer period, indicating good insight into his fluctuating mood states. He was open in discussing his quality of life concerns, particularly the lack of time for friendships. He was also engaged and curious during the values clarification exercise, identifying areas of alignment and misalignment between his values and current behaviors.

Overall, Nick presented as motivated for therapy, open to self-exploration, and capable of insight. He responded well to psychoeducation regarding attachment theory and the interpretation of his assessment results. His emotional expression was congruent with the content discussed, ranging from humor to more serious reflection.

## Assessment

Nick presents as a generally well-functioning individual who is navigating several life transitions and stressors with a degree of resilience, though his avoidant attachment style and patterns of anger expression continue to be relevant areas for therapeutic work. Current assessment results (BAI, BDI) indicate minimal current symptoms of anxiety and depression, which Nick attributes to recent positive life circumstances (e.g., impending move to a more private living space, no rent). However, his self-report suggests that over a longer period (e.g., the past month), his mood might have been lower, and historically he has experienced periods of depression significant enough to warrant medication (Prozac), characterized by somatic symptoms like fatigue and anhedonia rather than extensive cognitive rumination.

His Perceived Stress Scale score was moderate, which aligns with ongoing life adjustments, including the temporary living situation and managing work-life balance. The Quality of Life score (59%, moderate) appears significantly impacted by a perceived lack of connection with close friends, highlighting an area where his values (friendship) and current behaviors (limited social interaction due to work) are misaligned. This is a source of some distress for him.

Nick's primary attachment style is avoidant, which he recognizes in his tendency to withdraw or push people away. This pattern, likely influenced by intergenerational factors (his father), is relevant to his relationship with Kristen and his broader interpersonal functioning. While Kristen self-identifies as secure, Nick (and the therapist) express some skepticism, suggesting a potential area for relational exploration or for Kristen to develop deeper insight into her own patterns, especially under stress.

His anger expression is a key concern. He describes a physical manifestation (head tension, heat) and a strong, lifelong urge to hit inanimate objects when angry. This indicates difficulty with anger modulation and a reliance on physical release, which, while not directed at people, is a maladaptive coping mechanism. This pattern likely serves to discharge intense emotion but does not address the underlying triggers or teach healthier emotional regulation skills.

Cognitively, Nick does not appear to engage in extensive rumination when depressed, according to current assessment data. However, he does experience ruminative anxiety in specific situations, such as when flying. His strengths include good insight into his patterns (e.g., recognizing his avoidant tendencies, the impact of his work schedule on friendships), a sense of humor, motivation for therapy, and a capacity for self-reflection, as demonstrated by his engagement with the assessments and exercises in session. The upcoming move to the basement apartment is a positive development that is likely contributing to his current lower stress and improved mood.

## Plan

1. \*\*Continue Exploration of Attachment Style (ACT & Narrative Therapy):
   * Further explore Nick's avoidant attachment style, its developmental origins (particularly in relation to his father and family dynamics), and its impact on his current relationship with Kristen and other interpersonal relationships.
   * Utilize Narrative Therapy techniques to help Nick deconstruct unhelpful stories related to his attachment patterns and co-construct more empowering narratives around connection, vulnerability, and intimacy.
   * Use Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles to help Nick identify values related to relationships and commit to actions that align with these values, even in the presence of discomfort or anxiety associated with his avoidant tendencies.
   * Encourage Nick to discuss the results of his twin brother's attachment style quiz if Matt completes it, to explore similarities, differences, and potential shared family dynamics.
2. \*\*Develop Healthier Anger Management Strategies (DBT & ACT):
   * Teach Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) distress tolerance and emotion regulation skills to help Nick manage intense anger without resorting to physical outbursts (hitting objects).
   * Focus on identifying early warning signs of anger, de-escalation techniques, and healthy ways to express anger assertively and constructively.
   * Use ACT techniques to help Nick observe his anger without judgment, understand the underlying needs or values not being met, and choose responses aligned with his values rather than reactive behaviors.
3. \*\*Improve Work-Life Balance and Social Connection (Values-Based Action - ACT):
   * Utilize the completed Values Bullseye exercise to identify concrete, value-driven actions Nick can take to increase social interaction with his friends, John and Richie, despite his demanding work schedule.
   * Explore strategies for scheduling and prioritizing social activities, and problem-solve any barriers (e.g., fatigue, time constraints).
   * Encourage Nick to communicate his needs for social connection to Kristen and explore ways they can support each other in maintaining important friendships.
4. \*\*Monitor Mood and Stress Levels:
   * Continue to monitor Nick's mood and stress levels, particularly in light of his history of depression and current life transitions.
   * Re-administer assessments (BDI, BAI, PSS, QOLI) periodically to track progress and identify any emerging concerns.
   * Reinforce coping strategies for managing stress and low mood, drawing on his past experiences and identified strengths.
5. \*\*Follow-up:
   * Schedule a follow-up session for next week, May 15th, at 8:00 PM, as agreed at the end of the session.
   * The therapist will provide a report summarizing the assessment results (attachment style, BAI, BDI, PSS, QOLI, Values Bullseye) before the next session to serve as a baseline for ongoing work.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

Nick's session on May 8, 2025, displayed a range of tonal shifts, reflecting his engagement with various topics and his underlying emotional state.

1. **Lighthearted and Humorous (Initial Banter, Drone, Pope):** The session began with a light, humorous tone as Nick and the therapist discussed the therapist's new drone and made jokes about the new Pope. This indicated comfort and rapport.
2. **Content and Matter-of-Fact (Living Situation):** When discussing the current living situation with Kristen's parents and the upcoming move, Nick's tone was generally content and matter-of-fact. He conveyed a sense of practical acceptance, particularly regarding his minimal interaction due to his work schedule (“Nick couldn’t care less”).
3. **Skeptical and Playfully Sarcastic (Kristen's Attachment Style):** Discussing Kristen's self-assessed secure attachment, Nick’s tone shifted to skeptical and playfully sarcastic (“Okay, girl, you lie to yourself… those numbers be lying”). This humor seemed to mask a genuine questioning of her self-perception and perhaps a desire for her to acknowledge more vulnerability.
4. **Reflective and Curious (Own Attachment Style, Brother's Quiz):** When the conversation turned to his own avoidant attachment style and his curiosity about his twin brother's potential results, Nick's tone became more reflective and genuinely curious, indicating an openness to self-exploration.
5. **Engaged and Thoughtful (Assessments):** While completing the various assessments, Nick's tone was engaged and thoughtful. He provided nuanced answers, such as differentiating his BDI score for the past week versus the past month, showing good insight and a willingness to participate fully.
6. **Serious and Concerned (Anger Manifestation):** When describing his anger, Nick’s tone became notably more serious and tinged with concern. His description of the physical urge to “bash things” was delivered with an intensity that conveyed the power of this impulse, even as he clarified it was never directed at people. This shift highlighted a significant area of internal struggle.
7. **Disheartened and Slightly Resigned (Lack of Social Connection):** Discussing his limited contact with his best friends, John and Richie, Nick’s tone became disheartened and slightly resigned (“it’s like, I haven’t seen them in two months… it’s like, I see them six times a year. That’s like, that’s tough”). This conveyed a genuine sadness about the impact of his work life on his valued friendships.

These tonal shifts provided a window into Nick's internal world, revealing a capacity for humor and lightheartedness, practical acceptance of current realities, a reflective and curious mind, but also underlying concerns about his anger, attachment patterns, and the erosion of social connections due to life demands.

### Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged during Nick Dabreu's therapy session on May 8, 2025, offering insights into his current psychological landscape.

1. **Attachment and Interpersonal Dynamics:** This was a central theme, with Nick actively exploring his avoidant attachment style and its potential origins in his relationship with his father. He also contrasted his style with his fiancée Kristen's self-assessed secure style, expressing some skepticism and a desire for deeper understanding of their relational dynamics.
   * Quotes: “I am avoidant… I walk away from things and try to push people away sometimes.” (On Kristen) “I was like, Okay, girl, you lie to yourself.”
   * Connection: This theme is crucial for understanding Nick's patterns in close relationships, his fears of intimacy or engulfment, and potential areas of friction or misunderstanding with Kristen.
2. **Anger Expression and Regulation:** Nick identified a lifelong pattern of experiencing intense anger physically (head tension, heat) with a strong urge to hit inanimate objects. This highlights a theme of difficulty with anger modulation and reliance on physical discharge as a coping mechanism.
   * Quote: “when I get angry, I the urge… to fucking just bash things and bash hard things.”
   * Connection: This maladaptive coping strategy, while not directed at people, indicates a need for healthier emotion regulation skills to prevent potential negative consequences and to address the underlying triggers of his anger more constructively.
3. **Work-Life Balance and Social Connection:** A significant theme was Nick's struggle to maintain meaningful social connections, particularly with his close friends, due to his demanding work schedule. This has a noticeable impact on his perceived quality of life.
   * Quote: “the biggest thing with quality life is more so enjoying social interactions more than working… my two best friends, John and Richie, it's like, I haven't seen them in two months.”
   * Connection: This reflects a common modern challenge but also points to a potential misalignment between Nick's values (friendship, social connection) and his current life structure, leading to feelings of loss and dissatisfaction.
4. **Self-Awareness and Motivation for Change:** Throughout the session, Nick demonstrated a good degree of self-awareness regarding his emotional patterns (e.g., differentiating current mood from longer-term trends, recognizing his avoidant tendencies) and a clear motivation for therapy and self-improvement.
   * Examples: His engagement with assessments, his desire to explore his attachment style further, and his openness in discussing his anger.
   * Connection: This is a significant strength and a positive prognostic indicator for therapeutic progress. His willingness to be vulnerable and explore difficult topics is key.
5. **Life Transitions and Future Planning:** The upcoming move into a new apartment with Kristen represents a positive life transition. This theme also encompasses broader future planning and how current choices (e.g., work hours) impact long-term well-being and relationship satisfaction.
   * Example: Discussion of the new living space providing more privacy and benefiting Kristen.
   * Connection: Navigating these transitions effectively, while addressing underlying patterns like attachment and anger, will be important for Nick's overall well-being and relationship stability.

These themes are interconnected. For instance, his avoidant attachment might influence how he navigates work-life balance or expresses needs related to social connection, and his anger expression could be linked to unmet needs or frustrations in these areas. Therapy will aim to address these themes holistically.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Nick expressed a generally **positive current self-assessment** regarding mood (“BDI score… a three”), attributing it to favorable current circumstances. However, there was an undercurrent of **self-awareness regarding his challenges**, particularly his **avoidant attachment style** (“I am avoidant”) and his **struggle with anger** (“it scares the crap out of me”). He showed **curiosity** about his own patterns and a **desire for self-improvement**.

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Kristen (Fiancée):** Mostly **positive and affectionate**, though tinged with **playful skepticism** regarding her self-assessed attachment style. He showed **concern for her well-being** in their current living situation. \* **Kristen's Parents:** **Neutral to mildly positive**, framed by a sense of **detached acceptance** due to minimal interaction and financial benefits (“Nick couldn’t care less… I love her parents, and I’m not there”). \* **Twin Brother (Matt):** **Affectionate and amused**, highlighting their similarities (“drive me nuts because you're the same person”). \* **Friends (John and Richie):** Strong **positive sentiment** towards them, coupled with **disheartenment and sadness** about the lack of contact (“that’s like, that’s tough”). \* **Work:** Implied to be **demanding and time-consuming**, contributing to his lack of social interaction, but not explicitly framed with strong negative sentiment in this session, more as a factual constraint.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Nick demonstrated **high engagement and openness** towards the therapeutic process. He was **receptive to assessments and psychoeducation**, and expressed a **clear desire to continue exploring** his attachment style and anger. His humor and active participation suggested a **positive therapeutic alliance**.

**Sentiment Shifts:** Nick began the session with a **lighthearted and humorous** tone. This shifted to more **matter-of-fact and content** when discussing his living situation. When discussing attachment styles, particularly Kristen's, his sentiment became **skeptical and playfully sarcastic**. His tone turned **reflective and curious** when exploring his own attachment. During the discussion of his anger, the sentiment became **serious and concerned**. When talking about his friends, a sentiment of **disheartenment** emerged. Overall, he maintained an **engaged and open** sentiment towards the therapy itself.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor's) sentiment towards Nick was largely positive, appreciating his humor, insight, and motivation for therapy. I felt empathy for his struggle with work-life balance and the impact on his friendships, as this is a common and relatable challenge. There was also a sense of encouragement regarding his willingness to explore his avoidant attachment and anger patterns. A potential countertransference could be to be overly swayed by his humor and downplay the seriousness of his anger issues or avoidant tendencies. It was important to acknowledge the humor while gently guiding the conversation back to the underlying clinical concerns and the need for change in those areas. Another might be to collude with his skepticism about Kristen; instead, the focus remained on Nick's own patterns and perceptions, and how he can navigate the relationship more effectively, irrespective of Kristen's full self-awareness, while also holding space for the possibility that Kristen may also have her own patterns to explore if she chooses to.

### Key Points

* **Avoidant Attachment Style:** Nick identifies with an avoidant attachment style, recognizing tendencies to withdraw and push people away, which he is motivated to explore further, particularly its origins related to his father.
  + *Relevance:* Understanding and addressing this attachment style is crucial for improving his intimacy and communication with Kristen and for fostering healthier interpersonal relationships in general.
* **Anger Expression and Regulation:** Nick experiences intense anger physically with a strong, lifelong urge to hit inanimate objects, indicating a need for healthier anger management and emotional regulation strategies.
  + *Relevance:* This maladaptive coping mechanism, while not directed at people, poses a risk and prevents constructive resolution of anger-triggering situations. Developing new skills is vital for his well-being and relationships.
* **Impact of Work on Social Connection and Quality of Life:** Nick's demanding work schedule significantly limits his ability to connect with close friends, leading to feelings of disheartenedness and a lower perceived quality of life.
  + *Relevance:* Addressing this work-life imbalance and finding ways to nurture valued friendships is important for Nick's overall happiness and well-being, aligning his actions more closely with his stated values.

### Significant Quotes

* “I am avoidant… I walk away from things and try to push people away sometimes.”
  + *Context:* Nick discussing his self-identified attachment style.
  + *Significance:* This quote demonstrates Nick's self-awareness regarding a core interpersonal pattern. It provides a clear focus for therapeutic exploration and intervention aimed at fostering more secure attachment behaviors.
* “when I get angry, I the urge, and it scares the crap out of and I've done it my whole life to not people, hit things… I have a strong desire, yeah, to fucking just bash things and bash hard things.”
  + *Context:* Nick describing his experience and expression of anger.
  + *Significance:* This vividly illustrates the intensity of Nick's anger and his reliance on a physical, albeit object-directed, outlet. It highlights a critical area for developing emotional regulation and distress tolerance skills.
* “the biggest thing with quality life is more so enjoying social interactions more than working and that like that work life balance, where it's like my two best friends, John and Richie, it's like, I haven't seen them in two months… it’s like, I see them six times a year. That’s like, that’s tough.”
  + *Context:* Nick reflecting on his Quality of Life assessment and the impact of his work schedule.
  + *Significance:* This quote poignantly expresses Nick's awareness of a significant values-behavior gap. His work is impeding his ability to nurture important friendships, leading to dissatisfaction and a lower quality of life, making it a key area for values-based action.
* (On Kristen's secure attachment score) “I was like, Okay, girl, you lie to yourself… As soon as I saw, as soon as I was like, oh, Mercy Me, yeah, those numbers be lying.”
  + *Context:* Nick humorously recounting his reaction to Kristen's self-assessment of her attachment style.
  + *Significance:* While humorous, this quote hints at Nick's perception of potential incongruence in Kristen's self-awareness or perhaps a deeper dynamic in their relationship where he sees vulnerabilities she might not fully acknowledge. It underscores the complexity of their relational dance and the importance of his own secure functioning.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Nick Dabreu attended his therapy session on May 8, 2025, reporting a busy but positive week, highlighted by the good news that he and his fiancée, Kristen, will soon be moving into a basement apartment, offering more privacy than their current arrangement with Kristen's parents. Nick continued to explore his self-identified avoidant attachment style, contrasting it with Kristen's self-assessed secure style, about which he expressed some playful skepticism. He showed interest in understanding the origins of his attachment patterns, particularly in relation to his father.

Nick completed several psychological assessments (BAI, BDI, PSS, QOLI, Values Bullseye), which indicated low current depression and anxiety, moderate stress, and a moderate quality of life. His quality of life appeared most impacted by a lack of social interaction with his close friends due to his demanding work schedule, a situation he found disheartening. He also described his anger manifestation as a physical sensation with a strong urge to hit inanimate objects, a lifelong pattern. The session focused on processing these assessment results, further exploring his attachment dynamics, and identifying his desire to improve his work-life balance to foster social connections. His identified area of joy, coding and ethical hacking, stands in contrast to his current work. The therapist noted Nick's motivation for self-exploration and his engagement with the therapeutic process. A follow-up session was scheduled for May 15th, with the therapist agreeing to provide a summary report of the assessments to guide future work on attachment, anger management, and values-aligned living.

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for Richard Hayes's Therapy Session on May 9, 2025

## Subjective

Richard (Richie) presented to the session contemplating a men's retreat in Scottsdale, Arizona, scheduled over the Fourth of July weekend. He had received information from the retreat organizer, an American man living in Italy, and was weighing the pros and cons. Richie expressed initial interest, particularly as this retreat seemed more financially accessible (due to a $150 discount offered, making it around $1350, plus travel) and logistically feasible than previous ones offered by the same organizer (e.g., in Japan). However, he also voiced significant reservations.

Key topics discussed: \* **Men's Retreat Deliberation:** The primary focus of the session was Richie's decision-making process regarding the Scottsdale retreat. He had been in contact with the organizer for about a year, likely finding him via Instagram searches for male retreats or mental fitness. The retreat promised activities like yoga, breathwork, Tantric healing, and Qi Gong, aiming to help participants “rediscover play” and foster a sense of brotherhood. The organizer's promotional material, which Richie shared via text during the session, emphasized clarity, focus, energy, and post-retreat support through an online community, workshops, and private sessions. Richie was concerned about the host's qualifications, the authenticity of the marketing language (which the therapist ran through an AI detector and found to be 85% human-written, suggesting sincerity), the no-alcohol/no-hookup policy and its enforcement, the potential for “creepy old guys” among attendees, and the actual value versus cost, especially the $200/month post-retreat community fee. \* *Quote (Retreat Organizer's Text):* “You return with clarity, focus and the energy that helps you perform better at work, in relationships and in life. Also, the retreat isn’t an escape. It’s a reset… After the retreat, you’re yet access to our online community with live group workshops, past recordings, Qi, Gong, breathing, yoga work, yoga coaching and more, plus a couple more private sessions with me integrating what came through.” \* *Quote (Richie on cost/value):* “What’s the long term impact versus the short term cost? …would you be fine with it just be in those three or four days and it being worth that in cash? Or would you expect that cash to do dividends?” \* **Logistical Concerns about the Retreat:** Richie noted the retreat was shorter than ideal (Friday 3 PM check-in to Sunday 10 AM check-out, followed by brunch), feeling it might be too rushed to form deep connections or gain significant benefits. He also had concerns about travel logistics, such as arriving at 10 AM for a 3 PM check-in and the organizer's suggestion to wait at the airport lounge. \* *Quote:* “I feel like it’s too rushed… you’re only getting 24 hours of the full day, because Friday, everyone’s going to meet each other. You’re settling in, you’re unpacking.” \* **Family and Financial Obligations:** A major deterrent was the retreat falling on the Fourth of July weekend, a time typically spent with family at the beach/cabana. He also expressed significant frustration with his partner, Carla, regarding financial contributions to household expenses and the condo they own. Carla was supposed to contribute $700/month towards the condo but had only done so twice in a year. Recently, she was unable to pay her share of the property taxes or the cabana fees, leaving Richie to cover these expenses from money he had saved from his late Uncle Pete's estate, which he had earmarked for home improvements (new windows, bathroom renovation). \* *Quote (on financial frustrations with Carla):* “I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations. They fault to you, yeah, and you know, I’m pissed.” \* *Quote (on using his savings):* “The little bit of money that I had, I have plans for it, but I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations.” \* **Personal Needs and Justification for Self-Care:** Richie felt a pull towards doing something for himself, like the retreat or a trip to his Florida condo, as a form of self-care, especially given his frustrations with family financial dynamics and feeling like he is constantly doing for others. He justified this by comparing it to Carla and Bianca spending money on hair and nails. \* *Quote:* “I’m trying to do for me. I’m tired of doing for them.” \* **Boundaries with Family:** Richie described ongoing issues with Carla and Bianca not respecting his requests for no phone calls at work unless it's an emergency, with them often deeming everything an emergency. This highlighted a lack of respected boundaries. \* *Quote (Therapist):* “See, that’s not a boundary, that’s a request… They don’t respect any of your requests or boundaries.” \* **Church Involvement and Interpersonal Dynamics:** Richie discussed recent events at his church, including a private party for the priest's 80th birthday to which he and Carla were not invited, despite Carla's volunteer work cleaning the church. This led to feelings of being slighted, though he also recounted a recent positive interaction with the priest where a past rupture was repaired. He finds solace in attending Mass.

## Objective

Richard (Richie) arrived on time for his in-person session, appearing somewhat contemplative but engaged. His mood was generally euthymic, though he expressed clear frustration and annoyance when discussing financial issues with his partner, Carla, and the perceived lack of respect for his boundaries. He spoke articulately and coherently, with a normal rate and rhythm of speech.

Throughout the discussion about the men's retreat, Richie was thoughtful and analytical, weighing the pros and cons presented by the therapist and his own considerations. He actively participated in a weighted pros and cons exercise facilitated by the therapist to help clarify his decision. He was receptive to the therapist's observations and questions, including those about the retreat organizer's qualifications and the authenticity of the marketing materials.

When discussing the financial strains with Carla, Richie’s tone became more animated and frustrated. He detailed specific instances of unmet financial obligations on Carla's part, such as her failure to contribute her share for the condo expenses and recent inability to pay property taxes, forcing him to use his savings. His body language during this part of the conversation, while not overtly agitated, conveyed his irritation and sense of being burdened.

Richie also showed a capacity for self-reflection when discussing his desire for self-care and his attempts to set boundaries with his family. He acknowledged his tendency to justify spending on himself by comparing it to others' expenditures. He seemed somewhat resigned but also frustrated by the lack of respect for his requests regarding phone calls at work.

During the weighted pros and cons exercise regarding the retreat, Richie engaged seriously, assigning numerical values to different aspects. The exercise ultimately indicated that, based on his current priorities and concerns (holiday weekend with family, cost, perceived rushed nature of the retreat), staying home was the more aligned option, a conclusion he seemed to accept, albeit with some lingering intrigue about the retreat itself.

Overall, Richie presented as a man grappling with a desire for personal growth and self-care while feeling constrained by family obligations, financial pressures, and interpersonal frustrations. He was open to therapeutic exploration and tools to aid his decision-making.

## Assessment

Richard (Richie) is currently navigating a complex interplay of personal desires for growth and retreat, significant interpersonal financial stressors with his partner Carla, and long-standing frustrations regarding boundaries with his family. His contemplation of the men's retreat in Scottsdale appears to be a manifestation of his need for self-care and a break from these ongoing pressures, but the timing (Fourth of July weekend), cost, and perceived shortcomings of the retreat (rushed schedule) create a significant internal conflict.

The primary issue highlighted in the session is the financial strain and perceived inequity in his relationship with Carla. Her repeated failure to meet agreed-upon financial contributions for shared expenses (condo, taxes, cabana) places a significant burden on Richie, forcing him to deplete personal savings intended for other goals (home improvements). This is a major source of anger and resentment, and likely contributes to his desire to “do something for himself.”

Richie's decision-making process regarding the retreat, as explored through the weighted pros and cons list, revealed that his current values and practical considerations (family time, cost-saving, concerns about the retreat's value) lean towards not attending this particular retreat at this time. While intrigued by the possibility of connection and personal development, the logistical and emotional costs seem to outweigh the potential benefits for this specific opportunity. His statement, “this is not the time,” based on the exercise, reflects a rational assessment despite his emotional pull towards it.

His difficulties in establishing and maintaining boundaries with Carla and Bianca, particularly regarding non-emergency phone calls at work, are indicative of long-standing patterns of enmeshment or lack of respect for his individual needs. This contributes to his overall stress and feeling of being constantly available to others.

Richie demonstrates strengths in his capacity for self-reflection, his willingness to engage in therapeutic exercises, and his ability to articulate his frustrations and desires. He also shows a capacity for connection and deriving solace from his faith and church community, despite some interpersonal disappointments within that sphere. His frustration with the financial situation with Carla is justified and warrants further exploration regarding communication, financial planning, and potentially couples counseling if these patterns persist.

His consideration of the retreat, while ultimately leaning against it for now, does highlight an important underlying need for personal space, growth, and connection with like-minded individuals, which could be explored through alternative, perhaps more suitable, avenues in the future.

## Plan

1. \*\*Address Financial Stressors and Relationship Dynamics (Narrative & Solution-Focused Therapy):
   * Continue to explore Richie's feelings of frustration and resentment regarding the financial imbalances with Carla. Utilize Narrative Therapy to deconstruct problem-saturated stories around these financial burdens and co-construct narratives of agency and fairness.
   * Employ Solution-Focused techniques to help Richie identify specific, actionable steps he can take to communicate his financial concerns and needs more effectively to Carla. This may involve role-playing difficult conversations or developing a structured plan for discussing shared finances.
   * Discuss the possibility of setting clearer financial agreements and consequences with Carla, and explore whether couples counseling might be beneficial if direct communication does not lead to improvement.
2. \*\*Strengthen Boundary Setting Skills (DBT & Assertiveness Training):
   * Provide psychoeducation on healthy boundaries and the difference between requests and asserted boundaries.
   * Teach DBT interpersonal effectiveness skills (e.g., DEAR MAN, GIVE, FAST) to help Richie communicate his boundaries more effectively and assertively with Carla and Bianca, particularly regarding phone calls at work and other intrusions.
   * Practice these skills through role-playing in session.
3. \*\*Explore Healthy Self-Care and Personal Growth Opportunities (Existential & ACT):
   * Acknowledge and validate Richie's need for self-care and personal growth, as highlighted by his interest in the retreat. Explore alternative ways to meet these needs that may be more aligned with his current circumstances and values (e.g., shorter local workshops, dedicated personal time for hobbies, a planned solo trip to his Florida condo with clear intentions for reset and reflection).
   * Utilize Existential approaches to explore themes of meaning, purpose, and personal fulfillment, helping Richie identify what truly constitutes a “reset” or growth experience for him.
   * Use ACT principles to help Richie clarify his core values related to self-care, connection, and personal development, and commit to actions that align with these values, even if they are smaller steps than a full retreat.
4. \*\*Decision-Making Support (Cognitive Restructuring):
   * Continue to support Richie in using structured decision-making tools (like the weighted pros and cons list) for significant life choices, helping him to balance emotional desires with practical considerations.
   * Help Richie challenge any cognitive distortions (e.g., all-or-nothing thinking regarding self-care opportunities) that may be influencing his decisions.
5. \*\*Follow-up:
   * Schedule a follow-up session to continue exploring these issues.
   * Encourage Richie to reflect on the decision not to attend the Scottsdale retreat and any feelings that arise from that decision, and to consider what he learned from the decision-making process itself.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

Richard's session was characterized by several distinct tonal shifts as he navigated the complex decision of attending the men's retreat versus managing his ongoing life stressors.

1. **Contemplative and Inquisitive (Retreat Details):** Initially, when discussing the retreat details and the organizer, Richie's tone was contemplative and inquisitive. He was seeking information and genuinely trying to understand the offering, as evidenced by his questions about the host's qualifications and the nature of the activities.
2. **Skeptical and Cautious (Retreat Marketing, Policies):** As he delved into the specifics, particularly the marketing language (which he texted to the therapist) and policies like no alcohol, his tone became more skeptical and cautious. He questioned the authenticity and practicality of these aspects (“How do you stop that? And what exactly, how are you going to enforce that?”).
3. **Frustrated and Annoyed (Financial Issues with Carla):** A significant tonal shift occurred when Richie discussed the financial dynamics with his partner, Carla. His voice became more forceful, and his language expressed clear frustration and annoyance regarding her unmet financial obligations and the impact on his own savings and plans (“I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations. They fault to you, yeah, and you know, I’m pissed.”).
4. **Resigned yet Justified (Self-Care vs. Family Obligations):** When talking about his desire to do something for himself versus the constant demands and financial responsibilities related to his family, his tone held a note of resignation but also a clear justification for his need for self-care (“I’m trying to do for me. I’m tired of doing for them.”).
5. **Analytical and Deliberative (Pros and Cons Exercise):** During the weighted pros and cons exercise facilitated by the therapist, Richie’s tone was analytical and deliberative. He engaged thoughtfully in assigning values, indicating a serious attempt to clarify his priorities.
6. **Accepting and Resolved (Decision on Retreat):** After the pros and cons exercise pointed towards not attending the retreat at this time, Richie’s tone shifted to one of acceptance and resolution, albeit with a hint of lingering intrigue about the retreat concept itself (“This is not the time”). This suggested he found clarity through the structured decision-making process.

These tonal shifts painted a picture of a man carefully weighing a desired personal experience against pressing financial and familial responsibilities, with his frustration about the latter clearly influencing his overall state and decision-making.

### Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged during Richard Hayes's therapy session on May 9, 2025, reflecting his current life challenges and internal conflicts.

1. **Desire for Personal Growth and Self-Care vs. Obligations:** This was a central theme, exemplified by Richie's contemplation of the men's retreat. He expressed a clear need for a “reset” and an opportunity for personal development and connection, contrasting this with the ongoing financial and familial obligations that often leave him feeling depleted.
   * Quotes: “I’m trying to do for me. I’m tired of doing for them.” (On retreat value) “What’s the long term impact versus the short term cost?”
   * Connection: This theme highlights Richie's struggle to balance his own needs with the perceived demands of his relationships and responsibilities, a common source of stress and internal conflict.
2. **Financial Strain and Relational Inequity:** A significant portion of the session was dedicated to Richie's frustration with his partner, Carla, regarding her failure to meet financial obligations. This created a sense of unfairness and burdened Richie with unexpected expenses, impacting his own financial goals.
   * Quote: “The little bit of money that I had, I have plans for it, but I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations.”
   * Connection: This financial stress is a major contributor to Richie's overall frustration and likely fuels his desire for an escape or a significant personal investment like the retreat. It points to deeper issues of communication, responsibility, and equity within his partnership.
3. **Boundary Issues:** Richie described difficulties in maintaining boundaries with Carla and Bianca, particularly regarding non-emergency phone calls at work. Their tendency to deem everything an emergency indicates a lack of respect for his stated needs and professional space.
   * Quote (Therapist, summarizing): “They don’t respect any of your requests or boundaries.”
   * Connection: Weak or disrespected boundaries contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed and taken for granted, further underscoring his need for personal space and assertion.
4. **Decision-Making and Prioritization:** The process of deciding whether to attend the retreat highlighted Richie's analytical approach to decision-making but also the emotional pull of various factors (cost, timing, family traditions, personal need).
   * Example: His engagement with the weighted pros and cons list.
   * Connection: This theme reflects Richie's attempt to navigate complex choices by weighing competing values and practicalities. The therapy provided a structured way to clarify these priorities.
5. **Search for Connection and Community:** Richie's interest in the men's retreat, despite his reservations, suggests a desire for connection with like-minded individuals and a sense of brotherhood, which may be lacking in his current social sphere or family life.
   * Example: The retreat promising to help participants “rediscover play” and foster a sense of brotherhood.
   * Connection: This underlying need for connection is important to acknowledge, even if this particular retreat is not the right fit. Future therapeutic work could explore other avenues for fulfilling this need.

These themes are interconnected, with financial stress and boundary issues likely exacerbating Richie's need for self-care and connection, making the decision about the retreat more complex. Addressing the relational and financial stressors is key to freeing up emotional and practical resources for personal growth.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** Richie expressed a sentiment of **feeling burdened and taken for granted** (“I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations”). There was a clear **desire for self-care and personal betterment** (“I’m trying to do for me”). He also showed **analytical and thoughtful** sentiments when evaluating the retreat, but also **frustration** with his circumstances.

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** **Carla (Partner):** Strong **frustration and annoyance** regarding her financial irresponsibility and lack of contribution (“I’m pissed”). There was an underlying sentiment of **disappointment**. \* **Bianca (Daughter/Family Member):** Included in the frustration regarding boundary violations (phone calls at work). **Retreat Organizer/Retreat:** Initial **curiosity and interest**, which shifted to **skepticism and caution** as he considered the details and cost-effectiveness. There was a lingering **intrigue**. **Family (in general):** A sense of **obligation** (Fourth of July) mixed with the feeling of being **overburdened** by their needs or lack of respect for his. **Church/Priest:** Mixed sentiments; **disappointment** at not being invited to a party, but also **positive feelings** from a recent repaired rupture and solace from attending Mass.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** Richie was **engaged and receptive** to the therapeutic process, actively participating in the decision-making exercise and openly sharing his frustrations. He seemed to find the structured approach (pros and cons list) **helpful and clarifying**. His willingness to share texts from the retreat organizer indicated **trust in the therapist**.

**Sentiment Shifts:** Richie began with a **contemplative and inquisitive** sentiment about the retreat. This shifted to **skepticism** as he analyzed the details. A significant shift to **frustration and annoyance** occurred when discussing Carla and finances. When considering his own needs for self-care, his sentiment was one of **justified desire mixed with resignation**. During the pros and cons exercise, he was **analytical**, leading to a sentiment of **acceptance and resolution** regarding the retreat decision for now.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor"s) sentiment towards Richie was one of empathy for his feeling of being financially and emotionally burdened by his family, while also trying to carve out space for his own needs. I felt his frustration regarding Carla"s financial irresponsibility was valid. There was also a sense of appreciation for his thoughtful engagement in the decision-making process. A potential countertransference could be to become overly directive in the decision about the retreat, or to align too strongly with his frustration towards Carla, thereby unbalancing the therapeutic neutrality. It was important to validate his feelings while empowering him to make his own informed decision about the retreat and to explore constructive ways to address the issues with Carla. Another area was to ensure that while exploring his need for self-care, it wasn"t framed as merely an escape from his problems but as a legitimate need for personal well-being and growth, which might require addressing the root issues in his relationships as well.

### Key Points

* **Financial Strain and Relational Imbalance:** Richie is experiencing significant financial stress due to his partner Carla's failure to meet her financial obligations, forcing him to use personal savings and causing considerable resentment.
  + *Relevance:* This is a primary source of Richie's current distress and a major factor influencing his decisions and overall well-being. Addressing this imbalance is crucial for his peace of mind and the health of his relationship.
* **Conflict Between Personal Needs and Family Obligations:** Richie is grappling with a strong desire for self-care and personal growth (e.g., considering a retreat) while feeling constrained by family responsibilities, holiday traditions, and the financial needs of others.
  + *Relevance:* This internal conflict highlights the need for Richie to find a sustainable balance, assert his own needs, and potentially re-evaluate how he allocates his resources (time, money, energy).
* **Boundary Difficulties:** Richie struggles with establishing and maintaining clear boundaries with his family, particularly regarding interruptions at work, leading to feelings of being disrespected and constantly available.
  + *Relevance:* Strengthening his boundary-setting skills is essential for protecting his time, energy, and professional focus, and for fostering more respectful interpersonal dynamics.

### Significant Quotes

* “I keep getting sucked away from because people don’t do their obligations. They fault to you, yeah, and you know, I’m pissed.”
  + *Context:* Richie expressing his frustration about Carla not meeting her financial responsibilities, forcing him to cover expenses from his savings.
  + *Significance:* This quote encapsulates Richie's core frustration regarding financial inequity and the feeling of being unfairly burdened. It highlights the emotional toll of this ongoing issue.
* “I’m trying to do for me. I’m tired of doing for them.”
  + *Context:* Richie justifying his desire to attend the retreat or do something for himself.
  + *Significance:* This statement reveals Richie's growing awareness of his own needs and his fatigue with constantly prioritizing others. It signals a potential shift towards greater self-advocacy and self-care.
* “What’s the long term impact versus the short term cost? …would you be fine with it just be in those three or four days and it being worth that in cash? Or would you expect that cash to do dividends?”
  + *Context:* Richie questioning the value proposition of the men's retreat.
  + *Significance:* This demonstrates Richie's analytical approach to decision-making and his concern with tangible, lasting benefits versus immediate expenditure, especially given his current financial pressures.
* (Therapist, reflecting Richie's situation) “See, that’s not a boundary, that’s a request… They don’t respect any of your requests or boundaries.”
  + *Context:* The therapist clarifying the difference between Richie's requests for no work calls and actual respected boundaries.
  + *Significance:* This highlights a key area for therapeutic work: helping Richie understand what constitutes an effective boundary and develop the skills to establish and maintain them, moving from mere requests to respected limits.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

Richie attended his therapy session on May 9, 2025, primarily focused on deciding whether to attend a men's retreat in Scottsdale over the Fourth of July weekend. While initially intrigued by the retreat's offerings of yoga, breathwork, and personal growth, Richie expressed concerns about the cost, the rushed schedule, the organizer's qualifications, and the timing conflicting with family traditions. A significant portion of the session was dedicated to Richie's considerable frustration with his partner, Carla, over her repeated failure to meet her financial obligations towards their shared condo and other expenses, forcing Richie to use his personal savings. This financial strain and perceived inequity were major sources of anger and fueled his desire to do something for himself.

The therapist facilitated a weighted pros and cons exercise, which helped Richie clarify that, despite the appeal, attending this particular retreat was not the right decision for him at this time, primarily due to the holiday conflict and financial considerations. Richie also discussed ongoing difficulties in setting and maintaining boundaries with Carla and his daughter, Bianca, particularly regarding non-emergency phone calls during his workday. The session highlighted Richie's need for self-care and personal growth, juxtaposed with feelings of being burdened by family responsibilities and financial pressures. The plan moving forward involves addressing the financial stressors with Carla, strengthening boundary-setting skills, and exploring alternative, more aligned opportunities for self-care and personal development.

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# Comprehensive Clinical Progress Note for John Best’s Therapy Session on May 9, 2025

## Subjective

John presented to the session initially discussing his new drone, a Black Friday purchase he was still figuring out. This transitioned into a more significant and emotionally charged topic: a text message he had dictated for his partner Mark to send to Mark\’s mother for Mother\’s Day, which John accidentally sent to a client instead. He expressed considerable horror and embarrassment over this error, especially given the personal and informal nature of the dictated message.

Key topics discussed: **Accidental Text Message to Client:** John was visibly distressed about sending a highly personal, dictated message (intended for his partner\’s mother) to a client. The message contained informal language, inside jokes, and references that were entirely inappropriate for a client communication (e.g., “Irish lesbian walking the red carpet,” “bedazzling the red carpet with leftover sequence from a Cher concert,” “furries,” and a garbled ending “Mark market Markarian Syrian soup stop”). He was mortified by this mistake and anxious about the client\’s lack of response. He shared the text with the therapist for context. *Quote (John, on the accidental text):* “I am horrified, and at the same time, wish it were you instead… it’s not something I would ever in a million years, ever, ever, ever, ever like the way I talk to you. I don’t talk to anyone like this.” \* *Quote (John, on the client’s reaction):* “She didn’t respond, no, and I don’t know what to say to her.” \* **Recent Family Wedding and Feelings of Disconnection:** John attended his nephew\’s wedding the previous Saturday. While he stated it was a “fun wedding” and he saw family, he reported feeling disconnected and not truly present. He described this as not being depressed, but rather a strange feeling of just “not being there” and wishing he could have enjoyed it more. He attributed part of this to difficulty hearing in loud, crowded places, for which he has hearing aids but doesn\’t always wear them. *Quote:* “I just wasn’t, I hate this expression, but I wasn’t really feeling present. I was, like, not connected, like, I just was, like, in my own little world. It was weird, actually.” \* **Exploration of Derealization/Depersonalization:** The therapist explored whether John\’s feeling of disconnection at the wedding could be related to derealization (feeling detached from the world) or depersonalization (feeling detached from oneself). John resonated more with the description of derealization, particularly the feeling of having to consciously think about and force social interactions that should flow naturally, and feeling “robotic” or like he\’s “fighting being robotic” in social settings. He connected this to past experiences where he felt “plastic.” *Quote (John, on feeling robotic):* “I feel very much like I have to think about doing it and make sure I do it… That’s the part to me that feels like that’s autism.” \* **Social Anxiety:** John acknowledged that all social situations are somewhat anxiety-provoking for him, even with his own family, whom he humorously stated, “judge me every day. I think I’m an idiot.” **Positive Social Interactions at the Wedding:** Despite the disconnection, John recounted some positive interactions, including compliments on his appearance (specifically his beard) and a particularly affirming comment from a nephew\’s husband\’s relative who called him a “good looking guy.” **Observations of Others at the Wedding:** John noted many attractive young people (“hotties”) at the wedding, humorously referring to himself as being in “hog heaven.” He also mentioned that the bride\’s mother, a successful woman, had an anxiety attack at the wedding and had to leave, which seemed to normalize his own social discomfort to some extent. **Discussion about the New Pope:** The conversation briefly touched upon the recent election of a new American Pope (Leo), who had spent many years in Peru. John expressed interest and shared some information he had read, including that the Pope had made some critical comments about gay families but was also seen as compassionate and progressive by some gay organizations. He reflected on the political dynamics within the Catholic Church. **Clinical Assessments:** John completed several clinical assessments via a link sent by the therapist: the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and a Quality of Life questionnaire. His BDI score was notably lower (9, indicating minimal depression) compared to a previous score over 20.

## Objective

John arrived on time for his session, initially engaging in lighthearted conversation about a new drone and fountain pens, demonstrating his characteristic humor and intellectual curiosity. His mood was generally euthymic, but shifted to clear distress and embarrassment when he disclosed accidentally sending a personal text message to a client. He spoke rapidly and with heightened animation when recounting this incident, frequently using self-deprecating humor to manage his anxiety.

When discussing the recent family wedding, John’s demeanor became more subdued and reflective. He described his experience of feeling disconnected and not present, using phrases like “in my own little world.” He was receptive to the therapist\’s exploration of derealization and depersonalization, thoughtfully considering the descriptions and relating them to his own experiences in social settings, particularly the feeling of needing to consciously

perform social interactions. He engaged actively in completing the clinical assessments sent by the therapist during the session.

John displayed a good sense of humor throughout, even when discussing anxiety-provoking topics. For example, he joked about his family thinking he is an “idiot” and his own self-proclaimed status as a “big pig” when observing attractive people. His interaction with the therapist was familiar and trusting, as evidenced by his willingness to share the embarrassing text message and his candidness about his feelings and experiences.

His BDI score of 9 (minimal depression) was a notable objective measure, indicating an improvement from previous, higher scores. He rated his current state as a “solid seven” on a scale where higher is better, despite the day’s rain.

## Assessment

John presents with ongoing social anxiety and experiences consistent with derealization, particularly in larger social gatherings like the recent family wedding. While his self-reported depression symptoms are currently minimal (BDI-II score of 9), the derealization and social anxiety contribute to a diminished experience in situations that are intended to be enjoyable, leaving him feeling disconnected and preferring to be home. His description of feeling “robotic” or needing to consciously “perform” social interactions highlights the cognitive effort and discomfort these situations entail for him.

The accidental sending of a highly personal and inappropriate text message to a client has understandably caused John significant acute distress and embarrassment. This event, while a mishap, taps into his concerns about professional presentation and interpersonal boundaries. His anxiety about the client’s lack of response is palpable.

John demonstrates a high level of self-awareness and insight, as seen in his ability to articulate his feelings of disconnection and his willingness to explore concepts like derealization. He uses humor effectively as a coping mechanism, though at times it may also serve to deflect deeper exploration of painful emotions. His engagement in the therapeutic process is strong, and he is receptive to psychoeducation and clinical assessment tools.

His hearing difficulties in noisy environments, for which he has hearing aids but does not consistently use, likely exacerbate his social anxiety and feelings of disconnection in crowded settings like the wedding. This is a practical factor that contributes to his overall discomfort.

Despite these challenges, John also reports positive social interactions and an ability to find humor in situations. His interest in new hobbies (drone, fountain pens) and his engagement with current events (the new Pope) suggest underlying curiosity and a capacity for engagement with the world, even if social interactions are taxing.

The improvement in his BDI score is a positive sign, suggesting that his overall mood may be more stable, even if specific anxieties persist. The derealization symptoms warrant ongoing monitoring and exploration of coping strategies.

## Plan

1. \*\*Address Accidental Client Communication (Existential & Solution-Focused Therapy):
   * Process John\’s feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, and horror regarding the accidental text message sent to the client. Validate his distress and explore the existential implications of such a mishap (e.g., vulnerability, loss of control over professional image).
   * Collaboratively develop a brief, professional, and appropriate message John could send to the client to acknowledge the error if he chooses to address it directly. Focus on a solution that alleviates his anxiety while maintaining professionalism.
   * Discuss strategies for managing digital communication to prevent future similar incidents (e.g., double-checking recipients, avoiding dictation for sensitive messages when distracted).
2. \*\*Manage Social Anxiety and Derealization (ACT & DBT Skills):
   * Continue psychoeducation on social anxiety, derealization, and depersonalization. Normalize these experiences as common manifestations of anxiety.
   * Introduce Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles to help John accept uncomfortable thoughts and feelings in social situations without letting them dictate his behavior. Focus on identifying his values related to social connection and committing to actions aligned with those values, even when anxiety is present.
   * Teach and reinforce DBT mindfulness skills (e.g.,

“Observe, Describe, Participate,” “Wise Mind”) and grounding techniques to help him stay present and manage feelings of derealization in overwhelming social environments. \* Encourage consistent use of hearing aids in noisy environments to reduce sensory overload and improve his ability to engage in conversations, which may lessen social anxiety.

1. \*\*Monitor Mood and Anxiety Levels (Ongoing Assessment):
   * Continue to use standardized assessments (BAI, BDI-II, PSS, QoL) periodically to monitor John\’s anxiety, depression, stress, and quality of life.
   * Discuss assessment results with John to foster insight and collaboratively track progress.
2. \*\*Explore Underlying Factors for Derealization (Narrative Therapy):
   * Gently explore past experiences or unresolved issues that might contribute to his feelings of derealization or being “plastic,” using a Narrative Therapy approach to help him re-story these experiences in a more empowering way.
3. \*\*Follow-up:
   * Schedule a follow-up session to continue working on these goals.
   * Check in on the resolution of the accidental text message incident and his feelings about it.

## Supplemental Analyses

### Tonal Analysis

John Best\’s session on May 9, 2025, featured a dynamic range of tonal shifts, reflecting his engagement with various topics and his underlying emotional state.

1. **Lighthearted and Playful (Initial Banter):** The session began with a lighthearted and playful tone as John discussed his new drone and fountain pens. His language was humorous, and he engaged in witty banter with the therapist.
2. **Horrified and Embarrassed (Accidental Text):** A dramatic shift occurred when John disclosed sending the inappropriate text message to a client. His tone became one of genuine horror, embarrassment, and anxiety. He spoke rapidly and used self-deprecating humor, but the underlying distress was evident (“I am horrified…”).
3. **Subdued and Reflective (Wedding Disconnection):** When discussing his feelings of disconnection at his nephew\’s wedding, John\’s tone became more subdued and reflective. He was thoughtful in describing his experience of not feeling present.
4. **Analytical and Curious (Derealization Exploration):** As the therapist introduced the concepts of derealization and depersonalization, John’s tone shifted to analytical and curious. He actively sought to understand these terms and relate them to his own experiences (“Tell me what they are. So I learn so much every week.”).
5. **Humorous and Self-Deprecating (Social Anxiety/Family):** When discussing his social anxiety and his family\’s perception of him, John reverted to a humorous and self-deprecating tone, a common coping mechanism for him (“They judge me every day. I think I’m an idiot.”).
6. **Appreciative and Affirmed (Compliments at Wedding):** Recounting positive interactions at the wedding, such as compliments on his beard, brought a slightly more positive and affirmed tone to his voice.
7. **Engaged and Compliant (Clinical Assessments):** While completing the clinical assessments, John\’s tone was engaged and compliant, though he peppered the process with his usual humorous asides.
8. **Relieved and Pleased (Assessment Results):** Upon hearing his improved BDI score, a tone of relief and quiet pleasure was discernible.

These shifts illustrate John\’s emotional complexity. The dominant undercurrent was anxiety, particularly social anxiety and the acute distress from the texting mishap, often managed through humor and intellectual engagement.

### Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged during John\’s session, providing insight into his current psychological landscape.

1. **Social Anxiety and Discomfort in Social Settings:** This is a pervasive theme. John explicitly stated that all social situations are somewhat anxiety-provoking, and his experience of derealization at the wedding underscores this. He feels a need to consciously “perform” socially.
   * Quotes: “All social situations for me are somewhat anxiety, right?” “I feel very much like I have to think about doing it and make sure I do it.”
   * Connection: This theme impacts his ability to enjoy social events and connect genuinely with others, leading to feelings of isolation even when surrounded by people.
2. **Derealization as a Manifestation of Anxiety:** John’s description of feeling disconnected, “plastic,” or “robotic” in social situations strongly aligns with symptoms of derealization. This appears to be a significant way his anxiety manifests.
   * Quote: “Yes, I probably in party settings feel that way a lot… where I’m, like, almost like, robotic, yeah, or, or I feel like I’m fighting being robotic.”
   * Connection: Understanding this as a symptom of anxiety can help in developing targeted coping strategies.
3. **Fear of Professional Misstep and Boundary Concerns:** The accidental text message to a client triggered intense anxiety related to professional image and boundaries. This highlights a sensitivity to how he is perceived professionally and the importance of maintaining appropriate client relationships.
   * Quote: “I am horrified… it’s not something I would ever in a million years… talk to anyone like this [a client].”
   * Connection: This incident, while accidental, touches on themes of control, professionalism, and the potential for shame or embarrassment.
4. **Use of Humor as a Coping Mechanism:** John frequently employs humor, often self-deprecating, to navigate uncomfortable emotions and topics. While engaging, it can also serve as a defense against deeper vulnerability.
   * Examples: Joking about his family thinking he\’s an idiot, his “big pig” comment, his banter during the assessment process.
   * Connection: Recognizing this pattern is important for therapy, to gently explore the emotions underlying the humor when appropriate.
5. **Search for Connection and Positive Affirmation:** Despite his social anxiety, John recounted positive interactions at the wedding, such as compliments, which he clearly valued. This suggests an underlying desire for connection and affirmation.
   * Example: The affirming comment from a relative: “You\’re a good looking guy.”
   * Connection: This highlights a strength and a motivator for engaging in social situations despite the discomfort.

These themes paint a picture of an intelligent, self-aware individual grappling with significant social anxiety that manifests as derealization, who uses humor as a primary coping strategy, and who is currently experiencing acute distress over a professional mishap.

### Sentiment Analysis

**Sentiments about Self:** John expressed strong sentiments of **embarrassment and horror** (“I am horrified”) regarding the accidental text. He also conveyed feelings of **social awkwardness and disconnection** (“I wasn’t really feeling present,” feeling “robotic”). There was a layer of **self-deprecating humor** used to manage these uncomfortable feelings. He also showed **relief and pleasure** at his improved BDI score.

**Sentiments about Others/External Situations:** \* **Client (who received text):** Anxiety and uncertainty about their reaction (“She didn’t respond, no, and I don’t know what to say to her.”). \* **Family:** A mix of **affection and frustration/resignation** (“They judge me every day. I think I’m an idiot,” but also attended the wedding and noted positive interactions). \* **Wedding Guests/Environment:** Feelings of **disconnection and being overwhelmed**, but also moments of **appreciation for positive interactions** and humorous observation (“hog heaven”). \* **New Pope:** **Curiosity and intellectual engagement** with the topic.

**Sentiments about Therapy/Therapeutic Process:** John expressed **trust and openness** with the therapist, sharing a highly embarrassing incident and engaging actively in discussions about his internal experiences. He was **receptive to psychoeducation** (“Tell me what they are. So I learn so much every week”) and compliant with assessments. His humor was also present in his interactions with the therapist, indicating a comfortable therapeutic alliance.

**Sentiment Shifts:** John began the session with a **lighthearted and playful** sentiment. This shifted dramatically to **horror and embarrassment** when discussing the text message. When talking about the wedding, his sentiment became more **subdued and reflective**, then **analytical and curious** during the derealization discussion. He frequently shifted to **humorous and self-deprecating** sentiments when discussing his social anxieties. A positive shift to **relief and pleasure** occurred when discussing his improved BDI score.

**Counselor’s Sentimental Reactions & Countertransference:** My (the counselor\’s) primary sentiment was empathy for John\’s acute distress over the accidental text message, recognizing the vulnerability and shame such an event could trigger, especially for someone with social anxiety and concerns about professional presentation. I also felt a sense of validation for his improved BDI score, reflecting positively on his progress. There was an appreciation for his humor and intellectual engagement, which make sessions dynamic. A potential countertransference could be to minimize the texting incident due to his humorous presentation, or conversely, to over-focus on it and inadvertently increase his anxiety. It was important to validate his distress while also helping him to contextualize the event and develop a constructive plan. Another aspect was to ensure that while exploring his derealization, it was done in a way that normalized the experience as a symptom of anxiety rather than pathologizing it further, and to gently challenge the self-deprecating humor if it became a significant barrier to deeper emotional processing.

### Key Points

* **Acute Distress over Professional Misstep:** John is experiencing significant embarrassment and anxiety due to accidentally sending a highly personal and inappropriate text message to a client.
  + *Relevance:* This is a major current stressor impacting his emotional state and requires immediate processing and a plan for resolution to alleviate his anxiety and address any potential professional fallout.
* **Social Anxiety and Derealization:** John continues to struggle with social anxiety, which manifests as feelings of disconnection and derealization in social settings, such as the recent family wedding. He describes feeling “robotic” and needing to consciously perform.
  + *Relevance:* This is a chronic issue impacting his quality of life and ability to connect with others. Ongoing work on coping strategies for social anxiety and derealization is crucial.
* **Improved Depression Score:** John\’s BDI-II score has significantly improved to 9 (minimal depression) from a previous score over 20.
  + *Relevance:* This is a positive indicator of overall mood improvement and suggests that therapeutic interventions are having a beneficial effect, despite ongoing anxiety symptoms.

### Significant Quotes

* “I am horrified, and at the same time, wish it were you instead… it’s not something I would ever in a million years, ever, ever, ever, ever like the way I talk to you. I don’t talk to anyone like this.”
  + *Context:* John expressing his extreme embarrassment and distress over sending an inappropriate text message to a client.
  + *Significance:* This quote vividly captures the intensity of John\’s reaction to his mistake, highlighting his concern for professional boundaries and the unique nature of his therapeutic relationship where he feels safe to be more informal.
* “I just wasn’t, I hate this expression, but I wasn’t really feeling present. I was, like, not connected, like, I just was, like, in my own little world. It was weird, actually.”
  + *Context:* John describing his experience at his nephew\’s wedding.
  + *Significance:* This illustrates John\’s ongoing struggle with derealization and disconnection in social situations, a core aspect of his social anxiety.
* “I feel very much like I have to think about doing it and make sure I do it… That’s the part to me that feels like that’s autism.”
  + *Context:* John reflecting on the conscious effort required for him to engage in social interactions, which he likens to feeling “robotic.”
  + *Significance:* This quote shows John\’s attempt to understand and label his experience of social difficulty and derealization. While he mentions autism, it primarily points to the cognitive load and unnatural feeling of social engagement due to his anxiety.
* “Yes, I probably in party settings feel that way a lot… where I’m, like, almost like, robotic, yeah, or, or I feel like I’m fighting being robotic.”
  + *Context:* John confirming his experience of derealization in social settings after the therapist provided a description.
  + *Significance:* This quote validates the therapist\’s exploration of derealization and confirms it as a significant and recurring experience for John in social contexts.

## Comprehensive Narrative Summary

John Best attended his therapy session on May 9, 2025, initially presenting with his characteristic humor while discussing new gadgets. However, the session quickly shifted to a matter of acute distress: John had accidentally sent a highly personal and inappropriate text message, dictated for his partner Mark to send to Mark\’s mother, to one of his clients. He expressed profound horror and embarrassment over this error, particularly as the client had not responded. This incident became a central focus, with John sharing the content of the text and his anxieties about the professional implications.

John also discussed attending his nephew\’s wedding the previous Saturday, where he experienced significant feelings of disconnection and not being present, despite finding the event itself enjoyable. He described this as feeling “robotic” and needing to consciously force social interactions. The therapist explored these feelings in the context of derealization, a concept John found resonant with his experiences in social settings. He acknowledged ongoing social anxiety, even with family, though he also recounted some positive affirmations received at the wedding. John completed several clinical assessments during the session, with his Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) score notably improving to 9 (minimal depression) from a previous higher score. The session concluded with a plan to address the accidental text message, continue working on managing social anxiety and derealization using ACT and DBT skills, and monitor his mood.