

# A case study in psychology

Psychology



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### The Scenario

Jennifer a 29-year-old administrative assistant is married to Antonio, an Italian engineer, whom she met four years earlier while on a business trip for her marketing company. The couple now lives in Nebraska, where Antonio works for the county's transportation department while Jennifer commutes an hour each day to her marketing office. They have been trying to start a family for over a year. Eight months ago, Jennifer had miscarriage during her second month of pregnancy. Antonio's parents love Jennifer and often ask her if she is expecting again, hoping to encourage her to focus on her next baby. Jennifer's mother passed away two years ago and her father's health is rapidly deteriorating. Jennifer faces the probability of placing her father in a skilled nursing care facility within the next few months, against his wishes. At work, Jennifer runs a tight ship. She is organized and prepares lists to assure that everything is done according to schedule. Everyone counts on Jennifer and she takes pride in never letting people down.

Jennifer has visited her physician numerous times in the last six months, complaining of headaches, backaches, and indigestion. Jennifer insists that she is happy and is not feeling stressed, yet she finds herself making more mistakes at work, unable to keep up with housework, and feeling tired and overwhelmed; she has begun to question her effectiveness as an employee, wife, daughter, and potential mother. Her pains seem to be increasing, but her doctor cannot find a physical cause for her discomfort.

What are the causes of stress in Jennifer's life? How is stress affecting Jennifer's health?

In Jennifer's life one can see a great deal of factors or reason that can cause stress that eventually affected her health giving her backaches, headaches and indigestion. As a woman she needs to build her own family and have a child of her own. She had miscarriage during her pregnancy which disappointed her. Her parents grew old and her mother had died recently while her father has to be taken care of as his health was slowly deteriorating. As an employee, working as an administrative assistant the demands of her job was also exerting great pressures on her. In different areas in her life she had encountered life stressors. Her situation, the demands and frustration she experience can stressed her out. She may be doing everything she can to make sure everything goes well on her life but still there are things which seemed beyond her control.

How are these stressors impacting Jennifer's self-concept and self-esteem?

Stressors can greatly affect one's self-concept and self-esteem. Failure to meet the expectation of others and the one we set on our selves will surely change the way we look at ourselves. A person's ability to manage stress will have an effect on her self-confidence. People naturally want to succeed in every area in life. In Jennifer's case her difficulty in having a baby will make her feel depressed. These problems have already affected her health. Committing a lot of mistakes and being unable to keep up to the demands of time will produce a miserable self-concept. Problems or stressors can do make our lives miserable. Too much stress can contribute to or result into development of a negative instead of a healthy self-concept. Because of the stressors in Jennifer's life she started to question her effectiveness as an employee, wife, daughter and a potential mother. This could make her think

critically and feel condemnation. If the stressors become too overwhelming that she could no longer handle them it could lead to more serious problem like depression and other physical symptoms of stress.

How might Jennifer's situation illustrate adjustment? How might this situation become an opportunity for personal growth?

Adjustment is important in order for people to survive stressful situations. Sometimes people can view difficulties as an opportunity for personal growth by seeing the stressful situations as a challenge that can test one's strength or fighting spirit in times of difficulties.

Life consists of minor and major changes, changes in work patterns and unexpected events that can trigger stress to an individual. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale for example identified about forty-three events that could determine how stressful is the situation of a person that could possibly lead to physical illnesses.

In Jennifer's situation she has to make major adjustments in her life in order not to be overwhelmed or strain herself. Periods of adjustment help people to prioritize and make important decisions in life. Changes in life require people to make necessary adjustments in order to cope up and survive. She has to make major adjustments in her priorities as well as her attitude towards the situation. She can look at the situation and see how matured enough she is in facing the challenges of being a young adult which is one major transition or stage of human life. She must realize that as a young adult her situation could also be experienced by anyone like her. She needs to

accept the responsibilities involve in reaching adulthood, herresponsibilityto her parents, her own family and to hercareer.

What defensive coping methods is Jennifer using? What active coping methods might be healthier for Jennifer to use? Explain why you would recommend these methods.

The method of denial could be observed in Jennifer's reaction to her situation. She knows all the problem and pressures she is into but she keeps on denying that she is already stressed out. She kept on insisting that she is fine and happy but in reality she no longer is and that she already have symptoms of being drained and exhausted.

Since denial involves the refusal to accept reality and the person keep on acting as if the thought or feeling doesn't really exist. First she might have used this method to remind herself that she can still handle the situation. It lacks honesty on her part to admit that she is no longer satisfied in her situation. The moment she became true to herself she can find ways to put things in her life in proper order and seek immediate professional help or counseling.

Compensation is a defense mechanism that can help reinforce person's self-esteem by emphasizing and focusing on one's strength although they know they cannot be strong in all things. If Jenifer would use compensation she had to focus on her strengths more and not with her weaknesses as a person. She may be a failure in some areas in her life but she could think of the good things she had done so far in her career, her parents and her own

family. She can say that despite of her shortcomings she manages to work hard and keep everything under control.

Another way is the method of sublimation which is also a type of mature defense mechanism that involves channeling of unacceptable impulses into more acceptable ones. This method can be done with the use of humor or fantasy. Instead of focusing her energy over to anxiety she can look at the bright side of the situation by adapting humor or fantasy in her life. She could laugh at her own mistakes and weaknesses. She can laugh at her situation and think that everything is just temporary and everything will come to pass.

Select one theory of personality and use this theory to tell Jennifer how this theory explains her situation.

One theory of personality is Erikson's stages of psychosocial development which consists of 8 stages in human life together with the basic conflict, important events and outcome in each stage. This theory tries to show the possible development of the personality both the positive and the negative outcome. If the person fails to meet the expectation of each stage there is a possibility of having a poor personality development.

In this theory it emphasized the need to meet the desired outcome in each stage in order to function normally and have a positive self concept or personality development. As early as the time of infancy a person learns to develop a sense of trust with other people. During the early childhood a person needs to develop personal autonomy and independence order to move on to the next level. Failure to establish one self in each stage and the expectations will affect the personality of the individual in the long run.

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In what stage of development is Jennifer and what factors about this stage might be impacting her perspective of this situation?

Jennifer is in the young adulthood years characterized by relationships and intimacy. According to this theory the young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation. She had established intimate relationship with her family and her husband and also in the place of work. There is a need for her to satisfy the people around her failure to do so may make her feel isolated and defeated.

This stage in one's life is all about keeping and holding in to relationships that could lead to a satisfying life. She loves her parents but she also need to make time for her self. She wants her life to also revolve around her place of work since this gives her sense of purpose.

What relationship factors or considerations might be influencing Jennifer's problems?

Relationship factors or considerations that influence Jennifer's problems involve her marriage, family and career as an administrative assistant. Jennifer's problem arises due to the increasing demands coming from these relationships. She cannot avoid them and she needs to embrace them and accept them. Jennifer's problem is certainly common and can also happen to any young adult like her. She needs to ask for counseling and guidance to help her.

All the relationship problems she has must be resolve so that her health will not suffer. Her relationship with her husband Antonio and his family is

important to her and she would like to have the baby as much as she can. She also feels the pressure to take care of her father in his old age. She takes pride in never letting people down in her work but she has to realize that she cannot please everyone and she have to balance and prioritize her relationships. Making the right choices and not letting the relationship problems to influence her so much could make Jennifer cope up and survive the situation.

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