

MODIFICATION OF INFERIORITY COMPLEX AMONG ADOLESCENTS USING SELF-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.

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Abstract

This study: Modification of Inferiority Complex using Self-management Techniques was carried out as individual counselling. The study centered on modification of inferiority complex among adolescents in Enugu East Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, a client who exhibited the highest symptoms of inferiority complex among other adolescents was used as a case study, using behaviour modification techniques in an individual counselling process. The techniques used were self-instruction, assertiveness and self-monitoring, and such skills like prompting, listening, observation, ego boosting and reassuring were also used. The study was routed in Self-Monitoring and Adler's theory of Inferiority complex. The population and sample of the study is one adolescent living in one of the suburbs in Enugu East Local Government Area, being an individual counselling study, only one adolescent was used. The background of the client was taken. The behavioural milieu were observed, to get the base rate of the behaviour, a checklist was developed. The client was trained on how to apply self-monitoring in recording the exhibited symptoms. The antecedents and precedents of the client's behaviour were observed. The client went through the counselling process for six weeks. The symptoms exhibited each week were tabulated and put in graphic forms. The findings at the end of the counselling showed reduction in inferiority complex. The researcher therefore concluded that inferiority complex can be reduced through self-management techniques. It is therefore, recommended that Guidance Counsellors should employ self-management techniques in the modification of inferiority complex and its related problems.

Key words: Inferiority complex, Self-Management, Self-Monitoring, Individual Counselling, Behaviour Modification.

Introduction

People who suffer from inferiority complex try to compensate for their inferiority by making achievements. One should not be surprised when one realizes that a great number of achievers do suffer from inferiority complex. While some people try to compensate in a different direction by acting superior, believing that they are even God like or Omnipotent, it is referred to as superiority complex. Thus Farouk (2006) asserted that inferiority complex is an internal feeling that comes from within, and emphasized that some people spend their life collecting everything they can, like power, authority, money yet still suffer from the feeling of inferiority complex. Inferiority complex is a persistent sense of inadequacy or a tendency to self-diminishment, sometimes resulting in excessive aggression through overcompensation (Ewen 2003). That is to say that inferiority complex is when the feeling of inferiority is highly intensified to the degree that the child believes that he will never be able to compensate for his weakness.

There are different views of inferiority complex from different theorists. Adlerian theorist viewed inferiority complex as how one deals with a fear of failure. This feeling of inferior is often reviewed as being inferior to another person but this is not always the case in the Adlerian view, rather one often feels inferior to a task, such as a test. Thus an individual will only display his inferiority complex when faced with a task or problem in life that they do not feel capable of solving or mastering. In another angle, Eleanor (2008), pointed out that feeling inferior is different from knowing you are inferior, that an inferiority complex is a

general feeling of not being up to the mark. Eleanor went further to distinguish between knowing and feeling. For instance, one may know that she is inferior to Bill Gates financially, to Stephen Hawking intellectually, but this knowledge does not bother her one iota, therefore, knowing that one is inferior in some ways is different from feeling inferior. An inferiority complex is not the same as confidently accepting that others have the edge over someone in some areas. Thus, inferiority complex revolves around social states, power, ego and dominance. It is a combination of imagination and conditioning. For instance, most of us compare ourselves to others, mass media beams, riches and most talented people into our lives. Because we compare ourselves to people we know of, knowing the 'have it all' can make us feel correspondingly worse about ourselves. For instance, there was a case of a man called David who was on his way to work when he saw a man wearing torn clothes and lying on the pavement. David told himself, that's a very poor man; he can't afford to even buy new clothes. David kept on walking until he saw someone driving an old cheap car. Because David had a big and expensive car he felt confident upon seeing the man driving his old car. Few minutes later David ran into a guy of his age driving a very big luxurious car, David instantly looked at the ground and felt a bit inferior. This happened because David's subconscious mind has the bad habit of comparing him to others whenever he meets or sees others; his mind automatically starts comparing him to them. David usually compares himself to people of lower social class and feels good about himself, but because this is the way his mind was programmed to think he feels inferior whenever he meets someone from a higher social class than himself.

In another angle the psychoanalyst sees inferiority complex as a combination of emotions and impulses that have been rejected from awareness but still influence a person's behaviour. Hence, inferiority complex for them is a sense of personal feeling arising from conflict between the desire to be noticed and the fear of being humiliated. While for the Adlerian, inferiority complex is when the feeling of inferiority is highly intensified to the degree that the child believes that he will never be able to compensate for his weakness. However, compensation has this good quality of allowing people to use their feeling of inferiority as a powerful motivation towards achieving success, but when is wrongly directed causes inferiority complex.

However, the relevance of Adler's theory to life and society has tremendously increased, for instance, for Durbin (2004) most of human creative activity and sport activity are guided by deep sense of inferiority and writers and sportsmen overcome this in their unique achievements and distinctions. The growth of mushroom beauty parlours (salon) in every corner of the streets speaks vehemently of the Adler's theory of inferiority complex. Thus, by meaningful way of creativity and glorious achievements they compensate the complex. This feeling could be linked to Freud's concept of the 'ID', but here in a noble way, it is transformed and compensated. In a nutshell, in the view of Kosaka (2008) inferiority complex has to do with uncertainty, doubt of oneself and feelings of not measuring to standards. In a modern form, inferiority complex could be referred to as lack of self-esteem and self-worth. However, for Adler in his theory, inferiority complex becomes a problem that requires attention when the sense of inadequacy overwhelms the individual and if allowed could result to depression. It is on this backdrop that the researcher embarked on this study to determine the effects of Self-Management Techniques on inferiority complex among adolescents.

Theories Used

Adler's Theory of Inferiority Complex and Beck's Cognitive Behavioural Theory.

Therapeutic Goals- To help the client overcome inferiority complex, to make the client feel adequate and confident of herself, to increase the client's self-image, to help her change her concept of self as a 'no do well', to make her talk out in public, to make her build relationship by having interpersonal skills, to help her build her self-esteem, to help her achieve self-actualization, among others.

Techniques used: Self Instruction, Assertiveness and Self-Monitoring Techniques.

Skills for overcoming inferiority complex: An inferiority complex cannot be overcome overnight. It takes a good amount of time to regain one's lost self-esteem and to be able to ultimately see the world in a different light. However, the process has to start some time, for which some of these skills may be taken, prompting, observation, ego boosting and reassuring, positive thinking, differentiating the good from the bad, acceptance, avoidance, listening, among others.

Background of Present Case

The Client

Age = 20 years

Sex = Female

Identification of Behavioural Precedents, Antecedents and Consequences

Antecedents

Nature of problem: According to Edna, she started getting the feeling that she was inferior around 10 years ago. According to her history application intake sheet she has no serious disease and as a matter of fact is disease free with no major impediments physically by nature she does not have issues with people and is not afraid of them but because of her inferior feelings towards herself she avoids close contact with her class mates. She feels that competitive factor among students has caused her to withdraw from social activity or any form of group participation. She feels like she just doesn't measure up to the average student and prefers to study independently.

Factors that gave rise to this Behaviour

The precedents and antecedents were traced to the child's early childhood experiences and parental upbringing. The client has no pre-natal, physical or mental problems. She had been exposed to early abuses and use of derogatory words from her parents especially her mother who saw her and addressed her as a 'no do well'. She grew up in the mixed of siblings, whom she was always compared with and addressed as the worst among the siblings, each time one correction or the other, that whatever she said, she would be told she wouldn't have said that or why did she say that or that she was wrong. This contributed to her growing up not being sure of herself nor her potentials.

Consequences of the problem behaviour

The Counsellor observed that her feelings of inferiority were frequent and as a result chronically affected her social life outside and during school. Her grades were below average for most of her subjects but excelled in Further Mathematics and Physics.

Recording Behaviour Accurately

The Counsellor established the base rate data using Self-Monitoring Technique. The Counsellor tried to ensure an accurate recording. The correct recordings were drawn on monitoring sheet using the behaviour checklist. The list was made and given to the client to self-monitor. The client was given briefings by the Counsellor on what to monitor and what to record. This is to ensure that effective monitoring was done. The monitoring was done daily. At the end of two weeks, the frequency of occurrence of the inferiority thoughts and its manifestations were tabulated so as to establish the base rate data. The various manifestations of the inferiority feelings were recorded as follows: **Social withdrawal, Demeaning others, Blaming the universe, Sour grape attitude, Lack of sportsmanship, Extreme Sensitivity, Fear of making mistakes, Feeling of Winning, Fishing for compliments, Independent Study and Nervousness.**

A Summary of the Case and Counselling

Background of Present Case

The client is still living with the parents and after further propping informed the counsellor she did not pass SS3. She is 20 years old; she seemed quite literate well-spoken but very apprehensive and reserved when she was interviewed.

Edna grew up in one of the suburbs in Enugu, more like a slum with a befitting housing estate close to their boys' quarter apartment where she resides with her parents, her father a former railway staff and her mother a petty trader in Ogbete market. As a result of the environment where she grew up and her early childhood experiences, the Counsellor upon interviewing Edna observed that she had issues with authority figures who

give out orders in an unfriendly and threatening way. When the counsellor discussed this with Edna she further explained that the threat is perceived as the attack on her dignity and intelligence. If she says the wrong answer or feels the teacher is centering on her, she gets defensive and withdraws from participating in the class. But very apprehensive and reserved, when the Counsellor noticed she had no friends and was very defensive when the Counsellor asked about her social life.

After sometime has elapsed, the Counsellor hoped to achieve some sort of rapport with Edna but she felt nervous and apprehensive towards the Counsellor. The Counsellor knew that no further industrious effort or consultation would be eminent until she could establish trust and rapport. The Counsellor had an idea and hopefully she would change her apprehensive behaviour and come to terms with the issues. Then the Counsellor briefly talked about further mathematics and physics and how they could be related. She mentioned that further mathematics was actually a language which represents some sort of truth in science or in daily applicable events, such as random events in statistics. All of a sudden she seemed attentive and started talking about Steve Hawking and Albert Einstein and how they used mathematics to express their theories. She was very interesting to talk to and then started talking about the theory of black holes and the big bang theory. The counsellor immediately felt there was something in common and the Counsellor cracked a joke about Einstein saying “The only thing about Einstein one didn’t like was his hair do’ Edna immediately broke out in laughter and at that point the Counsellor knew the initial rapport had been accomplished. Then the counsellor took the opportunity to ask her if she would be willing to participate in a suggestibility test. She was thrilled about the idea that she should be able or suggestible.

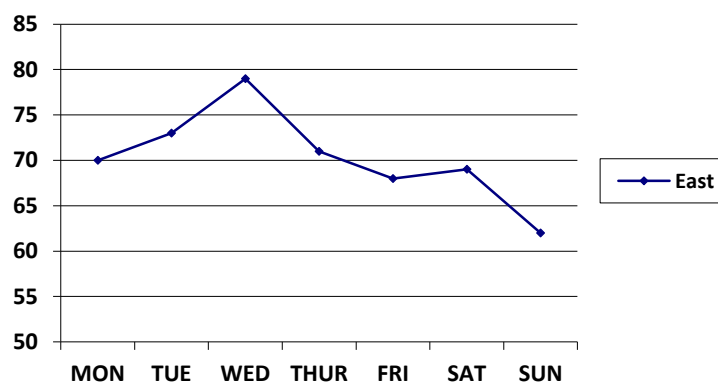
Edna was observed to see if she can take directions and to take suggestions; it was noticed that authoritative figures contributed to her feelings of inferiority so the counsellor rationalized that she would be better suited to a more permissive approach. Even though the Counsellor achieved a pleasant rapport with the client they still wanted to cement this mutual acceptance by further validation and reinforcement. The Counselor to facilitate positive results in this session encouraged and promoted consistent flow of relaxation throughout the sessions. The client seemed very receptive and agreeable to it. The relaxation induction was used as a suggestibility test and also as an induction and was in a continuous flow and led to the ego strengthening which the counsellor felt was important to boost her ego and confidence and again the Counsellor’s own wording complimented the induction especially when Edna regressed to that very sensitive moment in her past. In order to zero a certain extremely sensitive moments in her history, the counsellor needed to make her personal induction very powerful and convincing. The Counsellor used certain soothing wordings. While Edna was still in the ego strengthening induction phase the Counsellor sensed she was super calm and very receptive to the persuasive approach. The Counsellor added calming confidence building words such as: Edna, you are worthy of the best in life. You have a very organized, focused and brilliant mind. You absorb and have a fantastic imagination when it comes to science and mathematics and it shows in your work. Excelling in something so many people find hard is extraordinary.

Modification

The counsellor was observant of any behavioral excesses and deficits that compromise her ability to live normally. In this particular case study she was withdrawn from her social circle and prior to the induction process suffered self-doubt and felt inferior to the other students. In her basic assessment, the counsellor had her fill out a basic assessment form. In order to help Edna it was necessary to observe and study the frequency, intensity and duration of the behaviour. The actual problem was her feeling of inferiority as compared to others. Her behaviour patterns were: she avoided participation in class when singled out or challenged. She avoided all social contact inside and outside school hours. She also did not like authority figures and avoids communication with teachers. The effect it had on her emotion has been that she became angry, frustrated, withdrawn and insecure. Her physical sensations were that her extreme nervousness caused her to be tired more frequently. He imagined herself that she didn’t belong and eventually because of all these, her cognitive thought on this matter was that she needed help now and she felt she had potential because of her strong grasp of physics and mathematics. This treatment and interaction with the client lasted for four weeks and at the end of each week records were taken which were tabulated and put in graph, to check the extent of reduction of the behaviour. Thus, in order to establish base rate, it is necessary to observe the client for at least two weeks. The recording for the first and second week are as follows:

Week One; First week before treatment
 Checklist and Response before treatment using Self-Monitoring

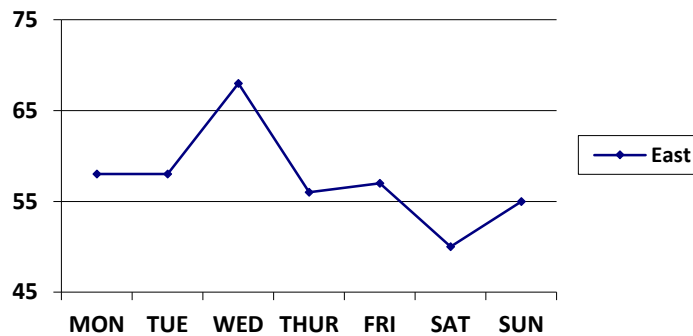
	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	6	10	8	10	11	10	8
2. Demeaning Others	6	6	8	8	7	8	7
3. Blaming the universe	7	5	7	6	8	5	6
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	5	4	6	7	6	7	3
5. Lack of sportsmanship	6	8	7	5	4	7	8
6. Extreme Sensitivity	8	7	6	5	6	6	5
7. Fear of making Mistakes	10	9	7	6	4	3	4
8. Feeling of Winning	6	7	9	7	6	7	8
9. Fishing for Compliments	5	4	7	5	4	4	2
10. Independent Study	7	8	7	6	7	6	7
11. Nervousness	7	5	8	6	5	6	4
	70	73	80	71	68	69	62



Inferiority complex week 2 before treatment

In order to establish base rate, the second week of the client was observed and recorded as follows:

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	6	6	7	5	6	5	4
2. Demeaning Others	5	4	6	6	4	3	4
3. Blaming the universes	6	5	6	4	5	4	5
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	7	6	8	5	6	6	7
5. Lack of sportsmanship	6	5	7	4	6	5	6
6. Extreme Sensitivity	5	6	4	6	4	4	5
7. Fear of making Mistakes	7	6	6	5	6	4	6
8. Feeling of Winning	4	5	6	4	6	5	5
9. Fishing for Compliments	5	4	7	5	4	5	6
10. Independent Study	3	5	6	7	6	4	3
11. Nervousness	4	6	5	5	4	5	4
	58	58	68	56	57	50	55



The behaviour had been recorded for two weeks and it was confirmed that the client has inferiority complex. Thus the levels of inferiority feelings in percentages are as follows

- 85% -----75% Very High
- 74% -----65% High
- 64% -----55% Average
- 54% -----45% slightly below average
- 44% -----35% Low
- 34% -----25% Very Low
- 24% -----15% Insignificant

In the checklist for both week one and two, it was observed that most of the inferiority feelings fell within the range of 85% to 65%.

Combined Based- Rate Chart before Treatment

Days in the Week - Total Number of Responses - Average number of Responses for
-Two Weeks - Two Weeks

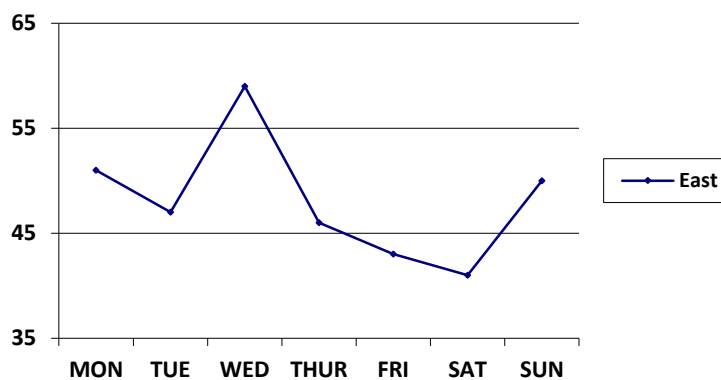
Monday	128	64
Tuesday	131	65.5
Wednesday	147	73.5
Thursday	127	63.5
Friday	125	62.5
Saturday	119	59.5
Sunday	127	63.5

Week 3 after establishment of Base rate

This is the third Week and the desired behaviour increased a little and there was a reduction in the high probability behaviour. All the treatment procedure was still applied in week three. The client was made to listen to words, praise and encouragement and emission of inferiority thoughts were ignored and with time he became acquainted with those desirable behaviours. The client was reminded daily of the parts to play to overcome the complex, in addition, oral reinforcement was used to enhance the desired behaviour. At the end of the third week the following recordings were taken. Looking at the recordings one observes that the modifying technique has positive impact on the client’s inferiority feeling.

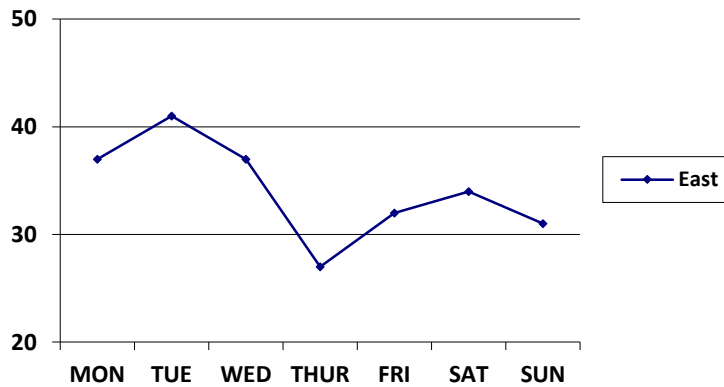
Third week inferiority complex

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	5	5	6	4	4	3	5
2. Demeaning Others	5	4	6	4	5	4	5
3. Blaming the universes	6	5	5	4	5	3	4
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	6	6	5	5	4	4	5
5. Lack of sportsmanship	5	5	4	5	4	4	4
6. Extreme Sensitivity	4	5	7	6	5	5	6
7. Fear of making Mistakes	6	5	7	5	4	4	6
8. Feeling of Winning	4	4	5	4	3	4	5
9. Fishing for Compliments	4	3	5	3	3	5	4
10. Independent Study	3	2	4	3	2	1	1
11. Nervousness	3	3	5	3	4	4	5
Total	51	47	59	46	43	41	50



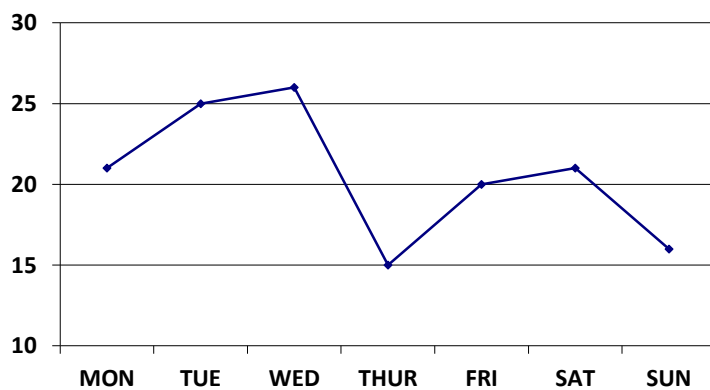
Fourth Week

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	3	4	3	2	3	4	3
2. Demeaning Others	2	3	4	3	4	3	3
3. Blaming the universes	3	3	4	2	3	3	3
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	4	3	3	3	2	3	4
5. Lack of sportsmanship	4	5	4	2	3	4	3
6. Extreme Sensitivity	3	4	3	2	3	3	3
7. Fear of making Mistakes	5	5	4	3	2	4	3
8. Feeling of Winning	4	4	3	2	3	3	2
9. Fishing for Compliments	3	4	3	2	3	3	3
10. Independent Study	3	2	3	3	2	1	1
11. Nervousness	3	4	4	3	3	4	3
Total	37	41	37	27	32	35	31

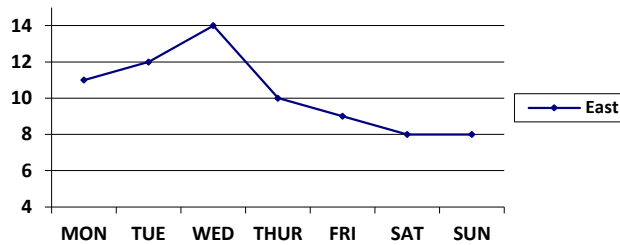


Fifth Week

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	2	2	2	1	2		
2. Demeaning Others	2	2	3	1	2	2	2
3. Blaming the universe	2	2	2		2	2	2
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
5. Lack of sportsmanship	2	2	2	1		2	2
6. Extreme Sensitivity	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
7. Fear of making Mistakes	2	3	2	2	2	2	1
8. Feeling of Winning	2	3	2	1	2	3	2
9. Fishing for Compliments	2	2	3	2	2	2	1
10. Independent Study	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
11. Nervousness	2	3	2	1	2	2	1
Total	21	25	26	15	20	21	16



Sixth Week



	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. Social Withdrawal	1	-1	1	-	1	-	1
2. Demeaning Others	-	1	2	1	1	1	-
3. Blaming the universes	-	1	2	-	1	1	-
4. Sour Grapes Attitude	1	-	-	1	-	1	1
5. Lack of sportsmanship	2	1	1	1	-	-	-
6. Extreme Sensitivity	2	2	1	1	1	-	1
7. Fear of making Mistakes	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
8. Feeling of Winning	-	1	2	1	1	1	1
9. Fishing for Compliments	1	-	2	2	1	1	1
10. Independent Study	-	1	-	1	1	1	1
11. Nervousness	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Total	11	12	14	10	9	8	8

It can be observed from the graphs that the client’s level of inferiority feeling was reduced in the sixth week.

THERAPEUTIC SUGGESTION

The Counsellor felt there was a solid rapport between Edna and the Counsellor making the two way communication more relaxing and trusting which in itself was therapeutic .

AUTO SUGGESTION

After the clearing of Edna's self-doubt of inferiority in her most sensitive moment the Counsellor instructed Edna in self-instruction therapy. She understands the steps pre sleep exercise every night for 7 nights. Her suggestion exercise involved anchoring all ten fingers with her thumb twice while saying 'every day in every way I am becoming more and more confident'. She also understands she must do same during the day for around 3 or 4 minutes. She did all faithfully.

OUTCOME OF THERAPY

Edna reacted well to the clearing of her most sensitive moment in history and as a result has improved her relationship with her mother. Her mother did confide in the Counsellor that she would accent the positive from now on in her daily communication with her and will encourage her in a friendly manner. Edna presently feels positive and upbeat and is ready to be more proactive which will give her many opportunities to feel confident.

Discussion

This was a very young client compared to others and the counsellor realized the procedures and professionalism had to be powerful because of her young age. Moulding a younger person when it comes to being confident and secure has to be done at a younger age, so that she would have ample time to benefit from it later in life. Her mind was very open to suggestions because of the powerful mutual rapport she had with the counsellor in the pre talk session. The Counsellor's caring approach was observed by her mother when the Counsellor extended the pre talk an extra half hour. She then realized that she could have been wrong in her earlier assessment of her daughter and also knew she had to do her part in moulding her in a positive and encouraging manner. One thing the Counsellor did observe was that talking about things she was familiar with boosted her ego and confidence and she no longer felt the Counsellor was authority figures and thus made her more suggestible. Also the manner in which the Counsellor praised her, calling her a brilliant mind in the induction process actually helped her focus better toward that extreme sensitive moment in the past. The client now realized that any time one goes out into the world, and keeps her head down to avoid looking at anyone, and hope they won't look at her too. When one sees an attractive or a talented person, one feels bad and deep inside, one wishes she can be like them, being constantly dissatisfied, always blaming oneself and have this chant in one's head that goes 'I am not good enough', 'I am not good enough'. The victim is gearing towards having inferiority complex and everyone got their own little reason to feel bad about themselves whether it's from physical defects, mental limitations or social differences, a person can feel ashamed and embarrassed of who he or she is.

Conclusion

Inferiority complex is not a healthy feeling, from the findings of this study; one will deduce that if one does not get rid of it, it will lead to depression, stupid risks to please others or a sad and unfulfilled life. Even though you don't notice it or admit it to yourself, it's possible that you have an inferiority complex. This behavioural problem comes from different causes. For example, you may have been brought up by your parents who often compare you with your siblings. You may also have physical imperfections such as a speech defect, weight problem or disproportional facial features. Mental restrictions, such as when you feel someone is smarter than you, can also lead to an inferiority complex. Another reason can be your social status, especially if you come from an underprivileged family. Before you can get rid of the depressing feeling, you should first accept that you have an inferiority complex.

Follow Up Therapy

Edna was given a specific job to do; she was to fill out a goal form which relates to goals and benefits, thinking when pursuing her goal, the feelings necessary to achieve it. Along with that, a deadline to complete the goal form was to be written. Because of this rapport with the counsellor, the client didn't feel it was

homework but admitted that it would be beneficial to her progress. The counsellor stressed that confident thinking need to be reinforced with proper associated actions.

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