

Crisis Intervention Case Conceptualization Paper

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## **Introduction and Case Summary**

The film, “My sister’s keeper”, is a heartbreak story about the Fitzgerald family and the nightmare their life had become. Kate is one of three children who was born to Brian and Sara. Kate was two-years old, she was diagnosed with leukemia. She was in need of a transplant, so her mom, dad, and brother were tested, but they were not a match. Sara was devastated to know that they could not help her daughter and was desperate for a solution. Kate’s doctor suggested, off the record, that they could have a “donor baby”, which means that they could genetically engineer a baby that would be a perfect match for Kate. Feeling lost and out of options, Sara agreed to this in order to save her daughter, thus Anna was born.

As soon as Anna was born, they started taking things from her to give to her sister. They harvested her umbilical cord, and she donated organs, blood, stem cells, etc., over her entire 13 years of life. Anna was hospitalized for many procedures and was injected with things such as growth hormones in order to try to get the maximum “help” they could for her sister. Despite this, Anna and Kate had a good friendship and relationship. Their older brother, Jesse, had been ignored over the years because his parent’s sole attention was for Kate. Sara quit being a lawyer when she found out Kate was sick, and her total focus was on keeping Kate alive. Therefore, there was no room left for Jesse, which drove him to become a delinquent juvenile. However, like Anna, Jesse loved Kate.

One day while Kate was in chemotherapy, she met Taylor, another teenager who was also a cancer patient. They eventually began dating and fell in love. They ended up having sex and Kate did not hear from him for days. She was so upset that Sara had to go to the hospital to look for him only to find out he had died. This devastated Kate and she attempted to kill herself with a pill overdose right in front of Anna. Days later Kate told Anna she was tired, and she just wanted

to die so she asked Anna to stop donating parts for her to live. Kate's petition was to be kept a secret between them two. Trying to help her sister, Anna proceeded to sue her parents for medical emancipation. Anna went to a lawyer who took her case and went to court on her behalf. While at court, Jesse told everyone the real reason why Anna was suing her parents, and this was very difficult for Sara to accept.

Kate was dying and she just wanted it all to stop, but Sara kept fighting so Anna would donate the kidney Kate desperately needed. However, since the case was ongoing, Anna did not donate her kidney. Knowing that Kate was going to die, the family gathered in the hospital room to spend time with Kate and when everyone left Kate helped her mom come to terms with the fact that she was dying. That same night Kate died. The family changed after Kate's death, but each year on Kate's birthday, they would make time to go to Kate's favorite place in Montana and spend time with each other while feeling close to Kate.

### **Thorough Assessment**

Anna is a 13-year-old female who has suffered many hospitalizations and health complications because she was always having medical procedures done. Psychologically, her mental and emotional health have been affected because she has been through a lot of firsthand and secondhand trauma. She has witnessed her sister's deterioration due to her cancer and this has been very difficult for her. Then, she witnessed her sister's suicide attempt right in front of her. Her social support system is not the best. While she does have her mom, dad, aunt, and brother, the family's main priority and concern is Kate, thus leaving scarce room for her. This makes it harder on Anna because she does not really feel like they are there for her. When she went and sought help from the lawyer, he became an advocate for her. This was an important turning point because he fought for her in a way no family member had.

This film is surrounded by trauma that affects the entire family, but this paper will focus mainly on Anna's life and trauma. All the challenges and traumas Anna has been exposed to have affected her tremendously. She is presenting with a feeling of worthlessness. She always felt that she was born with the sole purpose of saving her sister. She did not feel loved, she did not feel like she was autonomous, she did not feel like her life held as much value as Kate's life. She is also presenting with fear because she sued her parents for medical emancipation and she is afraid of their reaction, especially her mother's reaction. This was very difficult for Anna because she still had to live with her parents and loved them despite their actions towards her. Anna is also presenting feelings of hopelessness and helplessness because she feels like she failed her sister by being unable to save her.

### **Crisis Intervention Model**

When working with Anna, the best model to follow would be the Trauma Focused Crisis Intervention Model. This model states that one should first stabilize the individual in crisis. Secondly, one should help the individual cope with flashbacks of the experience. With Anna, this would mean helping her cope with flashbacks of her sister's suicide attempt, sick days, and death. Then, one should address disruptions to the client's cognitive schemas which includes beliefs about self and life, faith in the world being a safe place, and ideas about right and wrong. In Anna's case, one should specifically look at the disruptions about self, life, and ideas about right or wrong.

Next, one must help to establish safe relationships, which would include helping Anna restore her relationship with her parents. Lastly, one must encourage rejuvenation via good experiences and memories. This means that the client focuses on restoring balance and rebuilding what has been broken internally and externally, including physical damage to

themselves and their property. This would include helping Anna cope with her sister's death, all the medical procedures she has gone through, and the overall trauma she has accumulated over the years. This model seems to be the best model for this situation because it helps the client learn how to cope with flashbacks of her sister's illness and overall trauma. The model also helps the client reconstruct feelings about herself and determining what is right and wrong. Most importantly, it helps her restore balance and rebuild what has been broken in her life, thus helping her to regain normal functioning.

### **Treatment Plan**

Anna is presenting with feelings of worthlessness. This has been caused by years of being used as "spare parts" for her sister Kate. Anna was purposely conceived specifically for donating what her sister needed. She was constantly reminded that she was born with the sole purpose of saving her sister. She did not feel like her life held as much value as Kate's life. An intervention strategy for this problem is to talk through these feelings with Anna and set goals for her to practice reaffirming her self-worth, which would take about a week. The objectives are for Anna to be able to accept that her life is also worthy, to accept that it is okay for her life and health to come first, and to acknowledge that she is not just "spare parts".

Anna is also presenting with fear because she sued her parents for medical emancipation and she is afraid of their reaction, especially her mother's reaction. She is fearful of what her parents will do and say. She is fearful of how this will affect her family. For many years, Anna did not have a say over her body and now she has decided to take action, but it has been a scary. An appropriate intervention for this problem would be to teach Anna how to communicate these feelings of fear to her parents, which would take about two weeks. The objectives are for Anna

to be able to express her feelings to her parents, to understand that it is okay for her to advocate for herself and to get to a place where she is seeking justice and not revenge.

Anna is also presenting feelings of hopelessness and helplessness because she feels like she failed her sister by being unable to save her. As mentioned previously, Anna was born specifically to save her sister and now she feels like she has failed Kate and her family. Anna had a difficult time feeling as if she could help her sister while trying to honor her sister's wishes and have a normal childhood. An appropriate intervention for this would be to help Anna implement positive self-talk, which would take about two weeks. The objectives are for Anna to accept that she cannot control other's health, to accept that it is not her responsibility to save others, and for Anna to feel hopeful.

Lastly, Anna is having a difficult time dealing with the loss of her sister. While it has been something that the family knew was coming, it has still been difficult for them to lose a loved one. An appropriate intervention would be to help Anna learn healthy coping skills to deal with grief. Kate's health was slowly deteriorating and her death was inevitable. The objectives are for Anna to regain her everyday functioning and briefly cope with her grief until she is able to get into long-term counseling. All of these interventions will take time, but they will enhance Anna's life. The modality that would feel most appropriate for this case is the ABC Model, which focuses on antecedents, behaviors, and consequences. This model is similar to the CBT Model, and would be helpful in navigating through feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness with the client.

## Social Factors

When looking at Anna's life, it is evident that there was injustice done towards her. She was conceived with good intentions that rapidly turned ill when Kate's health seemed to show no improvement. There was a lack of concerns for Anna's health versus Kate's health. Anna was cared for, but it was mainly so she was healthy enough to help her sister. This was a form of social injustice because Anna was not being treated with dignity and respect. She was forced to donate different parts of herself to her sister without respecting her body and wishes. Though Anna is very young and some may not believe that she knows what she wants, she still deserves the right to be respected and treated as a human being. It is understandable that the sick child will receive more attention than a healthy child will because as a parent one's concern is to make sure all one's children are healthy. However, when it gets to a point that there is so much difference being shown between children, the situation must be questioned, especially if the child is going through such intense physical, emotional, and mental trauma.

Further intervention would be helpful for the client and the presented problems. At the micro level, Anna would benefit from long-term counseling. She has been exposed to a lot during her short life and she needs to process that more thoroughly. At the mezzo level, it would be helpful for the entire family to receive counseling as a family unit. There are many traumas they have experienced as a family that have affected them differently and it is important for them to process that together to better understand each other's perspective and to repair their relationships. At the macro level, what Campbell Alexander, Anna's attorney did for her was wonderful. There should be advocacy and education where the line is drawn so children like Anna are not, in a sense, abused to save another child.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The recommendation for Anna is that she is referred to long-term treatment. Though this short-term crisis intervention can be helpful, her trauma is extensive and must be more deeply explored. Another recommendation is for the family to receive therapy as a unit. Many factors have affected all their bonds and relationships. Kate's death has been a great loss, but they must learn to lean on each other to move through this painful time. They need to repair and rebuild their family.