

COUN 615: Psychopathology

Case Study 1-A

- 1) Read the case study and complete a mental status exam summary. You may use your notes as a guide.
- 2) Based on the information, use the DSM-5 to establish a diagnosis.
- 3) Support the diagnosis by relating the case information to the DSM criteria for your diagnosis.

Darlene is a 12-year-old sixth grader whose parents bring her in for evaluation following a psychoeducational evaluation by the school psychologist who found that she had a superior IQ and "a mild visually based reading disorder." Darlene did not qualify as having a learning disorder by school standards, however. The psychologist noted that compared with other parts of her IQ test Darlene's performance on recalling digits, mental arithmetic, and symbol coding was much lower, which he attributed to anxiety. He recommended an evaluation for a possible Anxiety Disorder. Darlene has had failing or near-failing grades since the third grade but, because of high IQ and model behavior, she was passed on to the next grade. She received numerous admonishments because of her apparent "laziness." She appeared to be uninterested, bored, and more concerned about her busy social life than about her studies. She complained that the middle school environment was too noisy for her to concentrate.

At home, Darlene was generally cooperative except for a growing resistance to homework. Her school papers were sloppy and disorganized. Her handwriting was notably immature and she printed rather than using cursive whenever possible. Further examination with the Test of Written Language revealed a 2-year delay in writing skills, particularly involving expressive writing as opposed to writing from dictation. Her spelling had been a problem since the second grade but was only moderately delayed. Darlene tended to rush through her work and had to be reminded to check it. Even so, she would often make many careless errors, even in areas where she had demonstrated previous competence. Although generally willing to do everything she was asked by her parents, she was unreliable and frequently had to be reminded about chores that were well established and should have been routine.

Darlene often appeared to be in a fog at home. When asked a question, she frequently failed to answer or would appear as if startled out of a reverie. She was considered a daydreamer. Since at least the first grade, her father's favorite nickname for her had been "my little space cadet." Darlene

was usually bored around the house and often importuned her mother to do something with her. Her mother taught her needlepoint, macramé, and drawing, but, despite her obvious pleasure at doing these things with her mother, she could seldom stick with them long enough to finish a project. She had even more trouble completing difficult homework. She said that when she was studying, she couldn't remember what was at the top of a page by the time she got to the bottom. She complained that she couldn't concentrate on her homework because there was so much "racket" in the house, but nevertheless would play rock music while doing homework if allowed to. According to her mother, Darlene had a fantastic memory for details that other family members had forgotten, yet she was forgetful about appointments, calendar events, or even meetings with friends that she had planned. She was known among her peers as an unreliable person who was usually late or missing altogether. Her favorite activity was browsing in the mall.