A Single Session with Mother Who reframed her Daughter’s Dating Relationship

Haruka Sakai¹, Megumi Kato², Norimasa Itakura³, Seiya Mitani⁴.

¹School Counselor of Gifu Prefecture
²Employment and Livelihood Support Center for Persons with Disabilities of Gifu Prefecture, Funabuse
³Gifu University
⁴Tohoku Fukushi University

ABSTRACT. In this case, IP had been absent a high school for a few days, after she troubled with her boyfriend. Then, her mother came to see school counselor (SC). The mother said, “I hope my daughter to break up her boyfriend”. However, if mother told IP to do so, she argued that her mother did not understand her at all, and did not listen to her mother. SC formulated a bad circle as described above. Then, SC emphasized that IP is kind and great, and her mother appreciate them. SC told the mother how excellent she was and intervened “please send a message to her that you really understand your daughter’s feeling.” After the session, the mother changed how to approach her daughter. Then her reaction was also changed, and they peacefully talked to each other. After all, IP started smoothly to go to school again. The mother regarded that the relationship between her and her boyfriend was complementary communication which means that her boyfriend is in one-up position to control her and her position is one-down. After the session, however, the relationship established in the mother changed into meta-complementary communication which means that the position of IP and her boyfriend seems to be one-up and one-down, respectively. After all, mother could give them the choice to break up or not. And she changed interacting with her daughter, IP started to go to school again.

KEY WORDS: Normalization, Utilization, Meta-complemental communication

Introduction

In this case, IP had been absent a high school for a few days, after she troubled with her boyfriend. Then, her mother came to see school counselor (SC). IP and her mother were regarded as “problem” by the school, because their relationship was codependence. This case finished in a single session for utilizing this relationship. In this report, we’ll discuss how mother reframed the relationship of IP and her boyfriend through the session.

Case Summary

IP and her boyfriend were third year high school students. They were in the same club, and started dating at the first grade. Teachers of their high school often guide them because they were always together even in public. Furthermore, her boyfriend had gotten along with another girl student, which made IP get angry and break a toilet. Therefore, IP was a
troublemaker for school. Her mother was also a troublemaker, because she criticized the school staff to protect IP anytime.

When IP was absent school, teacher recommended IP and her mother to have a counseling. On the day, IP did not come to school, so only her mother came to the session.

**Case Process**

1. **Clarification of problem**
   First, SC asked mother what distressed her. The mother said, “I hope my daughter to break up her boyfriend”. Mother thought that he said to IP, “someone spoke ill of you,” because he wants to monopolize IP. Therefore, IP didn’t know what and whom to believe, and she could not go to school. Then, SC asked a starting question, “what do you want to talk about to feel glad to be here?” Mother answered, “I want to break up my daughter and her boyfriend. For that purpose, I can do anything!” However, if mother told IP to do so, she argued that her mother did not understand her at all, and did not listen to her mother. SC formulated a bad circle as described above. The more her mother required her to break up with him, thus, the more she move away her mother.

2. **Exception**
   Mother told stories that seemed to be “exceptions”. For example, when IP decided not to go to school, she spent time calmly at home and said “I want to do my best for study and club.” Her mother thought that her daughter was a great girl. In addition, when IP was fine, she sometimes said “I wonder why I love him.” Her mother heard that her boyfriend was not cared for at his home. Thus, the mother thought that IP sympathized with him, and she might not help going around with him.

3. **Utilization and intervention**
   SC said, using the mother’s words, “it is normal that you want to break up them. But, your daughter seems to understand your thought. On the other hand, she may be painful because of her kindness and can not break up with him. Nevertheless, you really understand her kindness, I thought.” SC emphasized that IP is kind and great, and her mother appreciate them. The mother agreed and said “my daughter is kind, and commiserate with her boyfriend.” SC told the mother how excellent she was and intervened “please send a message to her that you really understand your daughter’s feeling.” Mother said, “Surely. If possible, I want to break up them as soon as possible, but it cannot be decided without her decision.”

**After the Session**

The next day after the session, IP and her mother came to school, and talked
with her class teacher. The mother said, “I had always circular conversations with my husband. After the session with you, I changed how to approach my daughter. Then her reaction was also changed, and we peacefully talked to each other.” After all, IP started smoothly to go to school again.

**Discussions**

In this report, we want to discuss two points below. First, how did SC process her resistance, and led intervention. Second, how mother reframed relationship of IP and her boyfriend.

1. **Processing resistance**

As one of processing resistance, normalization is considered useful. This mother wanted to break up them as soon as possible. This feeling was a sign to care for IP, but telling IP to break up made her feel that her mother does not know anything. After all, telling IP to break up was considered false solution. Then, SC expressed understanding mother's feeling, and normalized her mind. This provided relationship with mother and SC, and processed resistance. Moreover, this mother's way of thinking had been considered codependent on IP and troublesome by teachers of the school. However, SC dared to utilize this codependence, and complimented the mother on that the mother had comprehended her feeling that she could not have broken up with her boyfriend because of her kindness. Additionally, SC intervened the mother to tell IP that you understand your daughter. Utilization is a basic principle for solving problem proposed by Milton Erickson (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fish, 1974). He often utilized not only present problem and symptom, but also obstinate belief, delusion and behavior (William, H. O., 1987). In this case, SC highlighted the words that IP is kind and great” said by mother and the view that the mother appreciate IP. Therefore, it is considered that the mother's resistance could be processed and intervention was accepted.

2. **Reframed relationship**

Mother thought that IP's boyfriend wanted to control and monopolize her. But the mother thought that the reason why they did not break up is not only his possessive feeling but also IP's kindness and sympathy for him. Then, SC expanded the context so that the mother became convinced that IP is kind, so she cannot help going around with him. That is, the mother regarded that the relationship between her and her boyfriend was complementary communication which means that her boyfriend is in one-up position to control her and her position is one-down. After the session, however, the relationship established in the mother changed into meta-complementary communication
which means that the position of IP and her boyfriend seems to be one-up and one-down, respectively. In other words, meta-complementary communication is intentionally communicating complementarily to control the other person. Mother changed her thought of the relationship of IP and her boyfriend from complementary communication to meta-complementary communication. After all, mother could give them the choice to break up or not. In this case, although mother and daughter’s codependency is regarded as problem, SC dared to utilize the relationship, which enables IP to attend school. The frame of IP’s kindness could be a treatment double bind, because whatever she does with the frame, her mother would think her behavior as her kindness.

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