

Francie

Francie was arrested with a group of other kids at midnight, driving 80 miles per hour on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Prior to the situation in the van, Francie had been absent from home for several weeks, and her mother had no idea where she was. Francie was taken to the detention center after her arrest, and at the juvenile court hearing the next day, the court ordered informal supervision. The family has agreed to Family Preservation Services, and Francie returned to her mother's home.

History

Francie has lived with her mother on and off since birth. She never knew her father. Her mother has lived on public assistance and minimum-wage jobs since Francie's birth. She and her sisters, ages 12 and 10, all have different fathers. Francie's mother has lived with several men since her birth, some of whom beat her. Francie's mother has never had a stable marital relationship. She has been arrested for prostitution.

Francie has been cared for on and off by neighbors, relatives and licensed foster homes. Profound neglect, disorganization and physical deprivation characterized her early years. It was suspected that her mother's current boyfriend sexually fondled her when she was 10, but there was never any proof, and the mother broke up with the boyfriend. Her mother abandoned the children and moved to California with a man she met in a bar when Francie was five, and returned when she was six. Francie has been chronically truant from school.

Characteristics

Francie feels totally victimized by life's events. She feels she has no control over her world or people in it. She does not understand how her behavior has any effect on other people, or on what happens to her. When bad things happen, it's the other person's fault. She is baffled when people try to assign blame to her. She also sees other people's actions as arbitrary. She has no awareness of rules or of a structure to the world.

She is very impulsive. She cannot tolerate frustration, and has no ability to delay gratification. She takes what she wants, fights when she's mad, runs away when she's afraid and has tantrums when cornered. She is easily frustrated by small stresses.

She is totally egocentric. There is only one perspective from which to assess any event: her own simplistic view. If things go her way, she feels good. If things don't go her way, she gets mad. The sum total of life revolves around how she feels, what she wants, her concerns and needs.

Francie displays a kind of "bottomless pit" dependency. She attempts to use all relationships for gratification of her immediate needs. She is transparently insincere, and makes clumsy, insincere efforts to flatter or please other people in order to get what she wants. She doesn't get emotionally involved with people beyond trying to meet her needs.

Her relationships with people are limited and very shallow, and without continuity. Her "best friend" could be someone she met three days (or three hours) earlier. As long as people are nice to her, they are "friends". If they withhold what she wants, they are "mean". It is entirely possible for Francie to like you one minute and hate you 30 seconds later, depending on whether you've been "nice" or "mean" to her. If you're "mean" enough she'll abandon you, until you're nice to her again. She has no ability to take other people's perspectives; she has no idea that other people have feelings, and doesn't understand what those feelings are. Therefore, she interprets other people's behavior in a very concrete and egocentric fashion.

Because she has no understanding of rules or the feelings of others, she doesn't understand what other people expect of her unless it is spelled out in crystal clear, concrete, behavioral terms. "Please be considerate" is meaningless to her. She does understand, "Pick up your clothes and put them in the basket."

She has no ability to think about or plan for the future. Her life exists in the present moment and is dominated by getting her own immediate needs met. She feels other people should take care of her. In spite of feeling a victim, she has grandiose ideas about how wonderful things will be when she's 18 and "on her own". She has no conception of how this will happen, however.