

Terry

Terry is 16. He 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. He lives in a run-down house with his stepfather and an uncle who has an intellectual disability. Juvenile court ordered informal supervision of Terry a year ago after he broke into a neighbor's garage. The agency has had a case open on him ever since. Terry had been absent from home for several weeks. His stepfather didn't know where he was. Terry attends school sporadically. His stepfather works a job that often requires that he travel out of town. When he is gone, Terry does what he pleases. At the juvenile court hearing after his arrest, Terry was placed in the custody of the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

History

Terry's mother was married twice. Her first husband was Terry's biological father. His stepfather and his mother were married when Terry was six, about a year after the divorce. Terry had been close to his father. After the divorce, his father remarried and left the state. At the time of the divorce, he promised that Terry could visit him any time he wanted. However, he has not communicated with Terry since. Terry's mother left his stepfather many times during their marriage to live with other men, always returning when things didn't work out. She finally died of a drug overdose when he was 12.

Terry was a difficult child who wanted to have his own way. He and his stepfather have been in constant conflict since his mother's death. Terry thinks his stepfather is a "wimp" who lets people take advantage of him.

Characteristics

Terry likes himself. He sees himself as unique. He thinks that life is a game, and he feels great when he can beat it. Nobody in his family ever figured out how to "make it". He thinks he has, and claims it isn't hard. "Most people are pretty stupid," he says. "You can get what you want, if you're good enough." He sets up power struggles with adults in authority, and loves it when he wins. He says it gives him a real rush. He's in charge.

He was in the car with the other kids because "I figured since they had the joints, they could probably get some coke. I was about ready to score, too, when that damned police car pulled us over. We wouldn't have gotten caught if I'd been driving."

Terry is a manipulator. He approaches life by trying to figure out the rules of the game and then manipulates better than others. He figures you have to manipulate, or else others will "use you and take advantage of you. You have to be better than them". He's an expert at conning and conforming. He can be charming and cooperative, or can work a formula to get around you, depending on which strategy will best get him what he wants. He makes a good first impression, but people are quickly alienated when they realize his superficiality and lack of sincerity. He doesn't understand that conning and conforming are inappropriate and unproductive ways of relating to people.

Despite his ability to manipulate, he has a very circumscribed understanding of other people. Terry probably had the basic cognitive capabilities for insightful social interaction. However, he no longer has the capability or insight to recognize unselfish or cooperative motivation in others. He doesn't consider other people's feelings. He denies having any himself.

He has no close friends. He says he doesn't need them; he's perfectly capable of taking care of himself. He "doesn't have to depend on nobody!"

He claims he doesn't miss his mother. He says he was probably upset when she died, but got over it quickly. He doesn't remember much about his real dad. He doesn't think he was sad for long after his dad left. He doesn't remember, but "I was a pretty tough little kid. It probably didn't bother me". He creates an image of invulnerability and indifference.

He doesn't think being arrested was any big deal. He claims, "I'll be out of here soon, no big deal". He thinks it was pure bad luck they were arrested. He doesn't see himself as having any problems.