**Case Study: Carlos**

Carlos begins telling you about his teenage years which he describes as “confusing” and “lonely.” He stated that he felt he was not as good as the other boys he went to school with because he did not engage in sports and was not popular. Academically, he struggled to maintain a B/C grade point average and attributes this to his lack of interest in academic topics. Carlos did not engage in extracurricular activities and stated that his parents did not have the financial security to allow for Carlos to do many extra activities while in high school. He was often tasked with babysitting his two little sisters. He enjoyed playing video games and spending time with the few friends he did have. He described his group of friends as “misfits” because they all felt as if they did not fit in with the regular crowd of smart, athletic students.

Carlos reports that he did get along with his parents during this stage in life. He would argue often with his step-father and mother. He did not agree with their views of the world and believed that they just did not understand him. He was angry that he did not have the lifestyle many of the boys at school appeared to have and blamed his parents for his struggles. He spent a lot of time avoiding contact with his parents and would stay in his room for long periods of time alone playing video games.

Carlos had few employment opportunities in high school. His family had one vehicle which his parents shared to travel back and forth to work. This left little opportunity for Carlos to use the vehicle to travel to work. He did manage to find a job at a local McDonald’s not far from his home and would walk or ride his bicycle. He reported that he did not get many hours due to the fact that he was often late to work, and his supervisors complained that he was not fast enough when completing orders which would initiate complaints from customers.

Carlos stated that he would drink on occasion and use marijuana socially. He admitted that alcohol and marijuana would help him forget all the ways he felt he was not good enough. In his senior year in high school, he and his group of friends decided on a senior prank that included slight vandalism to the school. Carlos admits that he was present but only helped toilet paper the mascot statue and flagpole in front of the school. Other members of his social group spray painted the parking lot. They were caught by a janitor working late that evening and held legally liable for the damage. Carlos was sentenced to community service at a local homeless shelter.

While completing his community service hours, Carlos met a woman 10 years older than himself. She indicated to him that she had recently relocated and was having a difficult time getting established in the new community. Carlos took an interest in her and spent extra time with her listening to her concerns and brainstorming ways of helping her find a job and a place to live. As the year progressed, he grew increasingly fond of her and described this as the first time he was in love.

When Carlos was 19 years old, his biological father died suddenly of a heart attack. Carlos reported that he was not close to his father but would spend time with him on occasion throughout his childhood. His father’s passing was difficult for him at the time. Following his father’s death, he married the woman he met at the homeless shelter. This union only lasted a few months. Carlos stated that his wife described him as aloof and emotionally distant. She also complained of his lack of “drive” and immaturity which she believed were the cause of their limited financial resources.

After the divorce, Carlos moved home and spent his 20s moving from one menial job to the next. He stated that he could not find an occupation that he wanted to pursue. He continued to drink alcohol and smoke marijuana on occasion but spent most of his time playing video games. This caused many arguments between his parents and himself. He had a few dates during this time but claimed that he always felt inferior and intimidated by women so most of the encounters would last only a few dates.

At 26 years old, Carlos’ stepfather passed from a massive stroke. Carlos expressed that he had little emotional reaction to this death. Although his mother married his stepfather when Carlos was very young, he did not share a very close relationship. Carlos does not remember experiencing many occasions with his stepfather in which his mother and sisters were not involved. He states that he really did not know his stepfather. Following his stepfather’s death, Carlos continued to live and care for his mother. He believed he stayed primarily because he didn’t know what else to do rather than out of a feeling of duty or that his mother really needed him around.

When Carlos was 37 years old, he accepted a customer service position at a national insurance company. He states that this job fit him well. He worked the evening shift which he felt kept him from the hustle and bustle of the day shift when most of the administration and other departments were open. He has his own cubicle and could conduct his work without many distractions or interactions with others. This position helped him find a small apartment and buy a vehicle. Carlos disclosed to you that this was the first time he felt truly “good” about himself because he finally accomplished something worthwhile.

At 42 years old, Carlos’ mother died after a long battle with breast cancer. This death hit Carlos hard. He began drinking more and found it harder to enjoy his work. He stated that it took about two years for him to pull himself together and begin to enjoy his work. He continued to drink occasionally on the weekends but never has much as he had been immediately following her death. He has kept in touch with his sisters. He admits that he has felt some jealously as he watched his sisters grow up, become educated, and have families. He spends most holidays with them and their families but day to day communication is lacking. Although he has enjoyed hearing of their successes, he has secretly wished he had done many of the same things.

Carlos is now facing retirement. He admits that his career has not been what he expected it to be. He was often assigned the most menial tasks and was never given an assignment of much importance or responsibility. He did not promote in his 26 years of employment. He admits that he frequently did a “slip shod” job of what was given to him, never did more than what was required, and never demonstrated any assertiveness or initiative to his supervisors. Carlos tells you that he always dreamed of having more money, status, and power but could never seem to develop the qualities necessary for such success. He is concerned about what his life will be like upon retirement since he will no longer seem to have purpose to his daily existence. He knows it will be important to cultivate interests and hobbies as well as develop friendships in retirement but does not really know how to do these things.