

Mark

We knock for 10 minutes. 'Born to be wild' is blasting from the TV. Mark shuffles to the front door. In sweat pants, and a red t-shirt. Straight ahead lies Mark's closet. Where khaki pants and button down shirts neatly hang. There is nothing else hanging in Mark's apartment. Except for a 5 x 7 photo from 1997. High school graduation day. Mark in a tie. The Hafferton's dressed-up in floral & tweed on either side.

The Hafferton's are Mark's adopted parents. Mark sees his father every few weeks. When he takes the bus by himself to North Burnaby. Mark seems ambivalent about the relationship. Not sure whether to call himself a son. But he calls himself a brother. His older sister, Dawn, lives in Surrey with her husband and their two kids. Maybe he will move-in with them?

Mark's only just moved back to Burnaby. "It's a bit sad. To be on your own all the time," he tells us when we ask him about living in the apartment all to himself. Mark used to have a roommate. But it all got too much. The not sleeping, the anxiety, the over-eating, the throwing up, the two hour long bus ride into the city. He had enough.

And yet Mark has very little stuff. There's a small couch, a table, three chairs, a TV and a coffee table. With a large TV, and DVD player. No other photos, memorabilia, artifacts. Little in the fridge besides milk and some bread. He only owns two plates. Not generally a problem. Because Mark eats most of his meals alone. Vanessa, Eddy's mom who also lives in the building, prepares a lot of Mark's meals. She drops them by, and leaves. Or Mark takes the bus down the street to Burger King, and back.

Mark can eat a lot. In one go. Then his tummy hurts. As he puts it, "I binge eat and then self-induce vomiting to feel better. It's part of my anxiety and depression." The words 'self-induced vomiting' 'anxiety' and 'depression' seem to come from the therapist he sees once a week. Talk-based therapy. Not as good as the art therapy he had many years back. Reading, drawing, and looking at pictures take so much less energy than trying to talk. The words just don't want to come out.

2001 was the year the depression hit. That was the year he finished up at Douglas College. In the Employment Training Program. But then there was no job. "It was so hard to get a job. No one wanted me." He worked for a year at the Ridge Meadows Recycling Depot. It was OK in the summer, but terrible in the winter. And it had nothing to do with travel or tourism, Mark's real love.

Mark reads about other countries and cultures. He looks a lot at maps. He knows bus schedules. He avidly follows the local and international news. Including the traffic and the weather. It's comforting to know what's going on around him. Even when there is very little going on for himself.

A lot of days feel like Groundhog Day. For over 13 years, Mark has been going to Quest Community Kitchen. And learning to make the same set of dishes over and over again.

"I want something different," Mark tells us. "It's just the same thing on repeat." Even just learning to make a chicken or turkey roast would be novel enough.

>> *Drawing on Habituation theory: the relative permanent waning of a response as a result of repeated stimulation. Thrope W.H (1963). Learning and Instinct in Animals.*

There's no real source of novelty or challenge in Mark's life. His life skills worker, Teddy, has been around for years too - and even been there during or after the "incidents". Like the time Mark was detained by the police, or kicked out of the mall, for making a scene. Mark recounts the expulsion vividly. It left a deep mark. For all the drama, he likes Teddy. Sees him as a friend. Teddy does the shopping for him. Teddy helps keep the place clean. Still, Mark feels "isolated." He uses the term several times.

>> *Drawing on Sociometer theory: individual's feelings about themselves vary as a function of changes in other people's appraisals of them. Mark O. Leary (2003). Interpersonal Aspects of Optimal Self-Esteem and the Authentic Self.*

Just next door is Dan. Mark doesn't know Dan. But they both like to stay up late and listen to music. Then there's Mark's friend Eddy on the second floor. Eddy has a dog Mark likes, and uses the word friend to describe their relationship. But they don't hang out all too often. Mark

Words Mark uses to describe himself

Learner
Neighbour
Friend
Brother
Creative
Explorer
Questioner
Mentor

Poor
Single
Unemployed
Slow
Resident
Person served
Person in care

Thinker
Reader
Animal lover

Words other people use to describe Mark

Disabled
Retarded

Words Mark would use to describe himself in public

Developmentally delayed
Middle-class

STUFF MARK IS ATTRACTED TO....

Time out tools. "That's what I need, a good 'ol punching bag sometimes."

Relationship fixer. "I would like to get in touch with a college friend I've lost touch with."

Get me out of here service. "Because I want to get out of here and go for visits instead of being at home and isolated."

Part-time pets. "I think that service would lower my anxiety."

Cuddle party. "Now that would be a good thing to try."

Cook and eat together. "I don't like eating alone."

DISCONNECTS

Connected but stuck. Mark has got connections - Vanessa, Eddy, ToTeddy, his dad, his sister, Quest Community Kitchens, a therapist. Still, he feels isolated. And stuck in a rut. These experiences and relationships aren't facilitating trying new things, and internalizing a different story about himself.

Emotions, no outlet. Mark feels a lot. Sometimes, he has a public moment. Whee his inner feelings rupture. Then he's considered a "problem" to be expelled and detained. Beyond an hour of therapy every week, Mark has no way and no one to express his emotions to. They seem to coagulate physically.

	Mark
Comparisons	
type of narrative	Framed by anxiety, depression
focus on future	None
self-standards	To probe further
Emotions	
inner life & outlets	Anxious, lonely, bored; therapy is primary outlet, public suppression.

	Mark
Meaning	
sources of purpose	Still finding - travel & exploring
sources of autonomy	Getting on the bus
sources of reciprocity	Unclear
sources of competence & capacities	Bored of developing same capacities
Determinants we might shape	
resources to draw on	Income, relationship with sister
exposure & modeling	Limited
plasticity over time	Little - Same supports he's always had