

SECOND NATURE DISCHARGE SUMMARY
Second Nature Blue Ridge

STUDENT NAME: Charles Rogers
DATE OF BIRTH: 04/26/1995
DATE OF ADMISSION: 04/05/2012
DATE OF DISCHARGE:
CLINICIAN: Anthony Issenmann, Ph.D.

DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSIONS

Axis I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 300.02 Generalized Anxiety Disorder ● 311 Depressive Disorder NOS ● 305.20 Cannabis Abuse ● 314.01 ADHD (Combined Type) ● V61.20 Parent/Child Relational Problems
Axis II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● V71.09 No Diagnosis on Axis II
Axis III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deferred to physician
Axis IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problems with Primary Support Group ● Problems Related to the Social Environment ● Educational Problems ● School Avoidance ● Placement in a Wilderness Program
Axis V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Admit GAF: 40 ● Highest GAF past year: 45 ● Discharge GAF: 58

TREATMENT OVERVIEW

Charles was admitted to Second Nature on 04/05/2012. Second Nature is a licensed adolescent treatment program that utilizes the experiential opportunities of a wilderness setting with a clinically focused intervention. During his stay, he took part in the therapeutic milieu as well as individual and group therapy. As the treating clinician, I provided group therapy weekly and Charles participated in daily groups with our trained wilderness staff. In addition, I provided Charles with weekly individual psychotherapy and family intervention. Charles was given regular therapeutic assignments which were monitored by myself and implemented by the residential staff. As the treating clinician, I coordinated his treatment plan and treatment progress. Upon admission, Charles's parents reported primary concerns regarding a significant history of defiance, anger, substance use, depression and harmful peer relationships. This included considerable conflict with his parents, lying and deceit, withdrawal, and emotional reactivity. This produced significant impairment in daily functioning and inability to follow through with basic expectations. Initially, Charles presented as anxious, angry, and disengaged. He expressed little regret for his actions and little desire to address his problematic behaviors. Instead he victimized himself, blamed his parents, and avoided responsibility. However, Charles became more engaged during the course of treatment and displayed a more assertive stance. Over the course of treatment, Charles displayed significant progress in his ability to self-regulate mood and behavior. At times he continued to minimize issues and display poor frustration tolerance. However, he also made progress in accepting limits, managing his emotions, and displaying appropriate communication and social interactions.

Charles displayed significant improvement in his ability to cope with the challenges of living in the wilderness. He demonstrated consistent care of his physical self and personal gear. Challenges like primitive fire making, shelter building, food preparation, and daily chores were all difficult for Charles, but he developed some competence in these skills over time. Charles's work ethic in personal and social matters had a marked increase. He responded well to team building activities, a structured schedule, daily feedback, and interactions with trained field instructors. Charles participated in psychoeducational groups addressing practical skills valuable to healthy development and relationship management. Assertive communication, problem solving, empathy and awareness building, and personal expression are some of the skills Charles was asked to examine and demonstrate during his time in the program. Charles was open to these interventions and attempted to practice these principles over the course of his stay. Charles put forth effort to complete therapeutic and academic assignments, and shared these assignment with the group and his parents.

PROGRESS AREAS

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Charles developed an ability to recognize symptoms of anxiety and learned positive ways of managing his anxiety through expression of feelings, productive activity and cognitive restructuring. He expressed feelings through daily journaling, therapeutic writing assignments, and verbally in group and individual therapy sessions. Charles was encouraged to engage in productive activity when feeling anxious, including hiking, wilderness skills, and play. Charles learned and practiced cognitive skills for managing anxiety in individual and group sessions. While progress was made, Charles continued to display moderate symptoms of anxiety during the course of treatment, and experienced mixed success in his ability to implement strategies for managing anxiety.

Depressive Disorder NOS

The treatment process involved helping Charles learn healthy, appropriate ways to communicate both negative and positive feelings through assertive skills training, journal writing and other therapeutic assignments while in the program. As part of our comprehensive therapeutic process Charles was educated about the influence of diet on depression, and practiced healthy nutrition while in the program. Charles also maintained a healthy balance of sleep and exercise. Charles was able to identify factors in his life which have contributed to feelings of depression, and developed and practiced strategies for coping with them. Charles was exposed to cognitive-behavioral strategies for managing his depression. He was receptive to this intervention, but showed mixed success in his ability to implement those strategies to dispute irrational thought patterns. In order to facilitate change within an experiential approach, Charles successfully completed a multitude of challenges inherent in the program, such as creating his own fire with primitive technology, completing chores and participating in group planning on a daily basis. He was receptive to these challenges and displayed an increase in self-esteem and sense of competence as a result. As indicated both by self-report and by the observations of others, Charles displayed a generally consistent positive affect throughout his stay at Second Nature. Developing an awareness of self-destructive and self-defeating feelings, thoughts and behaviors is integral to our program and to the wellness of our students. Charles gained significant insight in these areas, and decreased these negative patterns over time. Charles increased his self-awareness and recognized how concepts like shame, fear, and negativity contribute to ineffective decision making and prolonged unhappiness.

Substance Abuse

Charles addressed issues related to substance abuse in individual and group therapy sessions, and completed therapeutic assignments specific to those issues. During his stay, Charles completed a solo experience in which time was spent reflecting on his substance abuse. He developed a greater awareness of the effects of his substance abuse on his relationships and daily functioning. Charles completed assignments on the course and negative impact of his substance use, and discussed those assignments in individual and group therapy settings. Charles also identified emotional and social triggers and risk factors related to drug and alcohol relapse, and completed relapse prevention assignments. He was asked to address patterns of self-medication and social acceptance and find alternative methods to meeting personal and social needs. Charles was exposed to 12-step concepts and the recovery model of therapy. He showed limited receptivity to this treatment modality, and does not see himself as having addiction and dependency traits. Charles remained drug and alcohol free during his stay in our program, and compared this period of sobriety to his recent history of substance abuse. Charles currently expresses a desire to remain abstinent from drugs and alcohol in the future, although Charles expresses ambivalence in terms of his ability to do so.

ADHD

While at Second Nature Charles learned about the nature and impact of ADHD, as well as strategies for compensating for these effects. Charles completed activities which required focusing and maintaining concentration. He developed an increased ability to delay gratification, focus appropriately on tasks, and set attainable goals. He also received feedback about self-defeating behaviors and identified the consequences of poor impulse control in his life. Interventions that were particularly useful with Charles included breaking complex tasks into a series of small steps, giving him one instruction at a time, repeating instructions, asking Charles to reflect what he heard, providing him with a quiet place to work on assignments, and giving him immediate feedback on behavior.

Although Charles displayed improved ability to manage symptoms of inattention during his stay at Second Nature, it is unclear whether these skills will translate to more structured academic environments.

Parent Child Relationship

Charles developed an awareness of the factors contributing to conflict with his parents and addressed these issues in individual and group therapy. Charles addressed and expressed feelings of frustration in his relationship with his parents, and identified strategies for working through these issues. He also addressed his tendency to blame others, and developed a stronger awareness of how such blame has impacted the family system and created family conflict. Learning to take ownership of his actions, as well as being aware of what is outside of his control, was an important part of his learning process at Second Nature. Charles experienced moderate success in this area. Charles learned and practiced a variety of assertive communication skills while in our program, both within the group and with his parents through letter writing. While challenging, Charles experienced moderate success in this area. During supervised parent visit, Charles demonstrated a significant improvement in his ability to express thoughts and feelings with his parents. He was able to listen to questions and concerns voiced by his parents. Charles was able to discuss his new goals, perspective, and fears clearly and effectively. Overall, improvement was made in his ability to appropriately and assertively communicate with his parents, and to have healthier interactions. His defensiveness and resistance have decreased.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Charles was discharged from Second Nature on 06/06/2011. Aftercare options were discussed with parents. I believe that Charles was genuinely motivated to make progress at Second Nature, and enjoyed the relative stability of the wilderness setting as a chance to “regroup” and experience some success. However, I remain concerned regarding his risk for relapsing in the areas of anxiety, behavioral problems, depressive symptoms, and substance abuse if he were to return to his home environment after completing our program. I believe that if any long-term gains are to be made, he must be in a residential or therapeutic boarding school setting after Second Nature so that he can practice and internalize the tools he learned at Second Nature. Returning to his home environment, even with intensive outpatient therapy or school accommodations, would most certainly result in significant regression and a return to his previous level of functioning. Charles remains highly susceptible to external pressures and has not yet internalized the ability to implement the coping strategies he has learned at Second Nature without a structured setting. Further, I would strongly recommend that he go directly from Second Nature to his next placement. Returning home, even for a few days, would place him at great risk for a regression in functioning and would undo much of the progress that he has made at Second Nature. Charles would benefit from a small, structured setting with clear rules/boundaries and immediate natural consequences. A more supervised environment will encourage a continuation of the experiential and psycho-education strengths he gained at Second Nature and also allow parents and professionals to see Charles respond to new challenges and responsibilities without putting Charles at undue risk. School accommodations and a more individualized instruction plan will be important for academic success. The school needs to be aware of his previous personal challenges as they create a plan that can support weaknesses and encourage strengths. It is recommended that Charles participate in individual, group, and family therapy. It is recommended that Charles continue to receive treatment for substance abuse. This may include both formal counseling as well as random drug tests. As Charles has demonstrated a strong attraction to substances and the drug culture, supervision will help provided additional support while he develops new skills and attitudes about substance abuse. Charles will likely benefit from firm, clear limits combined with an empathic approach from therapists, staff, and peers.



Anthony J. Issenmann, Ph.D.