

Kai is a 13-year-old third generation Asian American who just completed his first year of high school. Kai's family originates from Thailand and they often celebrate their heritage through holidays, family events, and food, but Kai and his parents are mostly acculturated to living in the United States. Kai's parents hold high expectations of him and he often finds himself falling into the Model Minority myth. Kai shares with you that his parents expect him to make good choices, do well in school, have morally up-standing friends, and generally be a "perfect" child. He also shares that he feels like he can never measure up to the high standards of his parents which makes him feel guilty and like he is failing them in some way.

Kai jokes that his mom is "the face of the Tiger Mom movement" and states that she can sometimes be over-involved in his life because of her desire for him to do well. As you talk with Kai, you learn that he skipped eighth grade which is why he just finished his freshman year. He mentions he didn't know if he was going to finish and that "it's been a big adjustment". Despite the age gap between Kai and his peers, Kai shares that he's beginning to make some friends and he feels like he's been accepted into a friend group that really accepts him for who he is. He shares that he doesn't feel pressured to fit in, and he believes his new friends would be there for him through thick and thin.

In a separate interview with Kai's parents, his mother shares that Kai has been acting a bit unusual for several months. She mentions that Kai is usually very energetic, talkative, friendly, and outgoing. Lately, she has noticed that Kai has been more reserved at home, a bit moody, and seems "troubled" in some way, but she can't quite put a finger on it. She also shares that Kai's grades have fallen since beginning 9th grade and getting Kai a tutor did not seem to help. Kai's father confirms these observations and adds that Kai hasn't been as open with him as he usually is when talking about his friends and after school activities. Kai's mother shares that, at first, she thought Kai's behavior might be a normal response to skipping a grade, going to a new school, and dealing with puberty, but now she is concerned that something else may be going on.

When you ask Kai about his parents' concerns about his unusual behavior, he seems reluctant to answer your questions but finally gives in. You learn that Kai's new friend group is actually a group of sophomores who have been known to have a bad reputation because of rumors that they are drug users. Kai admits he began huffing with his new group of friends because he wanted to fit in, but now he has started huffing even when he is not around his friends. You learn that Kai initially started huffing permanent markers with his friends and gradually experimented with the paint in his father's garage. Kai states he "got more experienced" and began bagging so that he could bring substances with him to school.

You ask Kai how often he used to huff with his friends when he first met them to which he replies, "Only for a little while after school. I didn't want my parents to find out, so I didn't spend a lot of time with them." Initially, Kai would huff whatever his friends shared with him to socialize with them, but soon it began helping him to deal with the immense pressure of his parents and difficult coursework. Now Kai says he bags throughout the day at school by asking teachers to use the restroom and during passing periods. Kai shares that he feels like keeping up this behavior is a chore and he really doesn't want to be a "bad kid" in his parents eyes, but if he goes for too long without huffing or bagging he starts to feel the craving. You ask Kai if his substance use is part of the reason why his grades slipped and he shares that "it's hard to really care about anything else except when I can escape again."

### Questions for Panelists:

1. What is the difference between bagging and huffing?
2. What's your clinical impression of this client and what would your first steps be in assisting the client?
3. What protective factors did you notice with this client? What risk factors did you notice?
4. Regarding your professional expertise, what treatment approaches might you use to assist this client?
5. What other information would be useful to know? Are there any potential assessments you might administer?
6. If you were caring for this client as part of an integrated healthcare team, what would be your role and responsibility to the client?
7. What outside resources might you recommend for this client?

### Student Questions

8. As therapists who may not be immersed in the ever-changing world of substance use, how do we stay up to date about the lingo of substance use, slang that clients may use, and how drug use changes over time?
9. There seems to be an element of attachment theory at play in this case with wanting to belong to a community. What substance abuse resources would you direct me to for work in this area?