

Client Name: Darius

Age: mid-40s

Gender: male

Race: Black

Ethnicity: Hispanic

Presenting Problem:

Darius is a Black male in his mid-40s who comes to see you because he has been experiencing increased anxiety and feelings of “wanting to jump out of [his] skin” in the past several months. He presents to the session casually dressed, well-groomed, and appears oriented to person, place, time, and situation. However, you notice that he looks somewhat malnourished and very tired. As you conduct your intake interview with Darius you learn that about a year ago he moved back into his childhood home because his aunt passed away and he is now the owner of her home as her only surviving heir. When you ask Darius about his previous residence, his answers are vague and it is clear that he is uncomfortable about that topic. Darius shares that his mother and father abandoned him at a young age, so his aunt chose to become his legal guardian and was his closest family member. He states that she “did the best she could”, but oftentimes they faced food insecurity and she barely made enough money to pay the rent.

You learn that Darius had a rough childhood in which he often had to fend for himself and “be the man of the house” for himself and his aunt. As a result he states that he is “familiar with violence”. When you ask him to explain this comment, Darius shares that his neighborhood was often a fighting ground between gangs and he regularly witnessed violent acts from a young age. He also remembers witnessing domestic abuse between his aunt and several of her partners and multiple incidents of drive-by shootings. During one of these drive-by shootings, a close friend of his was severely wounded and later passed away in the hospital. Darius shares that he “got his revenge” and since then has been “in trouble with the law” throughout his life. When you probe for more specifics he states that he doesn’t feel comfortable sharing that information and he doesn’t feel that his past is part of his current problems.

When you ask Darius more about his current problems, he shares that he often feels most anxious and uncomfortable when he is at home, and he tries to occupy his time by going to visit friends, looking for odd jobs around town, or visiting his church. You mention that he looks very tired, and he confirms that he often does not sleep well on account of the vivid nightmares he has. He explains he continues to have recurring dreams about old friends who passed away from various gang-related deaths, but when he wakes it’s hard to remember the details of what happened. Lately, Darius has had increased difficulty remembering important events and plans he has made with his friends, and he states that “none of it really matters anyways”. When you ask Darius about his previous comment about “wanting to jump out of [his] skin”, he explains that he feels very anxious as if someone might jump him when he walks around a corner and this has impacted his ability to think straight.

Questions for Panelists:

1. What protective factors did you notice with this client? What risk factors did you notice?
2. In your professional setting, how might you assist this client?
3. What other information would be useful to know? Are there any potential assessments you might administer?
4. If you were seeing Darius as part of an integrated healthcare team, what additional services would be important for Darius to receive from your perspective?
5. If Darius was an adolescent, how might your approach differ with him?
6. What outside resources might you recommend for this client?

Additional (if time permits):

7. How would you help this client manage real danger versus perceived danger?
8. Additional questions from our students