

Nutley Family Service Bureau applies successfully layered, family treatment approach

Delaney is a smart 18-year-old who came to me two years ago with mom.

They were clearly suffering from the separation pains that having a boyfriend, planning for college and beginning the driving process commonly cause. In a series of both individual and family sessions, we realized that Delaney was overly aligned with her older brother who was severely disabled and had moved into a group home when she was 12. The caretaking behaviors she had developed early on contributed to her choice of boyfriend, as he is needy and she mothers him as well. He is from a disadvantaged community and wasn't headed for college, driving or the clearer opportunities Delaney had before her.

I worked weekly to help mother and father understand their need to empower their daughter while slowly allowing the independence she subtly craved as well as referring her to a psychiatrist for anti-anxiety meds as Delaney had lost weight and was unable to sleep by the time senior year and separation had become imminent. The family actually transferred their dependency to me and the therapeutic alliance, but slowly we were able to progress them all through the college application process, driving, maintaining the relationship with boyfriend, college acceptance as well as orientation and the start of classes.

We plan to continue with family sessions in her absence and to meet when she is home, despite the fact that she is seeking campus counseling services. This is an example of the layered, family treatment approach NFSB is able to utilize and the rewarding success of one of the most empathic, earnest clients I have ever treated.

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