

Case Note - November 2, 1995

On this day, 13-year-old Emily Carson was observed for reported psychiatric issues. Emily was brought in by her parents who are concerned about recent changes in her behavior. According to the report of her parents, she has been experiencing hallucinations, claiming that she is visiting other worlds that are not our own. When asked for details about the world she "visits," she claims that the details of the world are similar to that of a favorite television show of hers, Time Busters, an animated program in which its two main characters travel through time and meet famous historical figures at key moments in history. Emily self-reported that since these episodes began that she has withdrawn from much of her social activities and hardly interacts with her family members while at home.

When asked if she feels as if these are simply dreams that she is having while asleep she begins to get agitated and flatly denies this. She claims that when she has gone to the world of the Time Busters that she was alert and awake prior to each instance. When asked to describe the antecedents to the "traveling" events, she claims that her parents are typically arguing and to remove herself from the situation she goes into her bedroom and watches a recording of the television program. Her parents refute the claim that they argue and insist that they reside in a stable, loving environment.

Prior to this visit, the patient was previously undiagnosed with any mental health-related diagnoses. A review of records from her pediatrician show that she has typically been a healthy, positive child.

Based on the observation, Emily displays early symptoms of a dissociative disorder, using preferred media to escape from reality in unhealthy ways. It is the recommendation of this professional that the acting physician begin a regiment of a mild psychotropic to begin treatment. It is also recommended that Emily undergo cognitive-behavioral therapy and interpersonal psychotherapy for adolescents.

Patient will follow up with the provider in 30 days. The patients will be contacted before this appointment to begin scheduling the aforementioned therapy sessions.

- Terry McMullin, MA
Lorain Behavioral Services

Case Note - April 18, 1996

On this day, the patient was observed. Emily's parents failed to bring her to the previously scheduled 30 day follow up appointment, but did bring her to one of the previously mentioned cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions. Following a consultation with the therapist, results of the initial sessions are inconclusive. Despite efforts to help Emily understand that she is not actually traveling anywhere she is adamant that isn't the case.

During this observation, we asked Mr. and Mrs. Carson would step into the waiting area so that we could see if Emily would be more open without them present, and while she maintained the stories regarding the children's television program, she seemed more willing to talk about events that are occurring prior to these events. She claims that her parent's relationship has been facing difficulties, with near daily fights occurring between the two of them. She reports that symptoms of being withdrawn, uninterested in activities, and feelings of hopelessness have been common for her because of what's been going on.

While conducting this observation, Emily was asked to provide some details about one of her recent "trips" with the Time Busters. She proceeded to describe her time there with Jimmy and Grace, the main characters, as being mostly enjoyable and says that they are her friends. She reports that during one trip to their world, the three of them met the 37th United States President, James Branson. This initially struck me as odd as this particular individual left the office of the presidency on questionable terms as he resigned following a sex scandal, so I felt that it was odd source material for a children's program. I contacted WLOR, the local broadcast affiliate that airs Time Busters and asked them about an episode about this subject. The production supervisor that I spoke with on the phone was very confused about my line of questioning, so I do not believe that this is something that she witnessed through the program itself.

Based on the observation, Emily continues to demonstrate signs of a dissociative disorder and she is now further disassociating by writing her own stories involving these characters. It is further recommended that Emily continue to undergo cognitive-behavioral therapy and interpersonal psychotherapy for adolescents.

- **Terry McMullin, MA**
Lorain Behavioral Services

Psychological Evaluation Report - Emily Carson

Author: Dr. Lisa Harcourt, PhD, Clinical Psychology
Facility: Lorain Community Behavioral Health Center
Date of Evaluation: June 24, 1996
Confidential - Patient Record

Background

Emily Carson, 14, referred by parents, as well as school counselor following a series of classroom episodes involving unresponsiveness and verbal repetition of "signal words." Parents report recent withdrawal, diminished appetite, and fixation on television broadcasts—primarily *Time Busters* reruns on Channel 71. Family denies prior psychiatric history. No reported substance use. No head trauma.

Presenting Symptoms

- **Auditory phenomena:** Reports a "constant hum" that "sits behind the quiet." Patient states it originates from the family television even when unplugged.
- **Visual disturbances:** Describes seeing "shadows inside the light" of the TV screen. Claims these shapes "move when the commercials do."
- **Sleep disruption:** Averaging two hours per night; insists she cannot dream "because the screen already does."
- **Behavioral changes:** Periods of catatonia alternating with manic energy; compulsive sketching of concentric rectangles ("frames").
- **Language drift:** Increasing use of media-related vocabulary to describe emotions ("I'm buffering," "My face cut to black").

Session Notes (Selected Excerpts)

Dr. Harcourt: What do you hear when it's quiet?

Emily: The hum. It's amber.

Dr. Harcourt: A color?

Emily: It's the color of when the show ends but the light stays.

Observation: Affect flat but not hostile. Eye contact inconsistent. Displays calm detachment when discussing disorienting experiences. Laughs once when asked to define "amber."

Dr. Harcourt: Do you think the sound is coming from inside you or outside?

Emily: Inside the picture.

Testing & Evaluation

- **Cognitive assessment:** Within normal range; attention fluctuates in presence of electronic devices.
- **EEG:** Mild irregularities during exposure to recorded WLOR broadcast; pattern resembles wake-REM overlap.
- **Physical exam:** Normal except elevated pulse when television test tone played.
- **MMPI-A results:** Elevated scores on Perceptual Aberration and Alienation scales; no malingering indicators.

Provisional Diagnosis

- **Axis I:** Possible emerging psychotic disorder (NOS).
- **Axis II:** Deferred.

- **Axis III:** No medical cause identified.
 - **Axis IV:** Environmental stressors-parental conflict, sensory overstimulation.
 - **Axis V:** GAF = 55 (moderate impairment).
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Recommendations

1. **Inpatient observation** for sleep stabilization and auditory hallucination management.
 2. **Environmental intervention:** Remove all electronic media from bedroom; evaluate EM interference levels in residence.
 3. **Follow-up EEG** under controlled broadcast-free conditions.
 4. **Family therapy referral**-parents express skepticism about severity.
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Clinician Remarks (Handwritten Addendum)

Mother insists the hum persists even with power disconnected.
Possible mechanical resonance from nearby transmitter?
Still-tone audible on playback recordings. Unverified. Will
request second opinion.

Patient calm at discharge. Said, "You'll see it too if you
stay tuned long enough."