

Danny, 8 years Admission

Danny is an 8 year old boy referred by his School counsellor at the local public school. He lives at home with his mother and father and younger sister. Danny has been increasingly worried about germs and his mother dying. He refuses to use public toilets including those at school. His mother has noticed that he frequently washes his hands and has begun taking long showers at night after school. He refuses to take his school bag and books into the house because they are “dirty”. Although he knows that these thoughts are strange, he says he can’t do anything about it.

Danny is described as a shy and quite child but he is able to make friends at school. His teachers describe Danny as having good verbal skills but being around the average in terms of academic performance. Danny’s teacher reports a recent deterioration in the quality of his homework as well as his school work. Recently, he has no longer been enjoying his friends’ company and prefers to stay at home watching TV or listening to the radio in his room. He becomes very anxious when his mother leaves the house, he becomes argumentative, throws tantrums, and occasionally kicks furniture. Last week, Danny had a tantrum when his mother indicated she needed to go shopping and during this tantrum he broke her favourite vase.

When you meet with Danny and his mother, you notice that he sits very close to her and looks at her frequently seeking reassurance that his answers are correct. Danny’s mother appears anxious and often interrupts Danny’s answers. Danny’s mother describes Danny’s father as supportive but has little understanding of Danny’s problems and is sceptical that health services can do anything for Danny. Danny’s father’s employment requires frequent interstate travel. Danny has been complaining of frequent stomach aches and has missed about 5 days at school over the last two weeks. No medical cause for these stomach aches has been found after several visits to GP. Danny’s mother was diagnosed with breast cancer three years ago. Treatment involved surgery and adjunctive radiation and chemotherapy. Although she has recovered well physically, she has had significant anxiety symptoms since the cancer diagnosis. She experiences intermittent panic attacks, and worries about her own health, her family’s well being, their finances, and many aspects of daily living. She denies any other family history of physical or mental illness. Danny’s mother indicates that she is unsure of the cause of Danny’s difficulties but has a good understanding of the services available.