

IDEATION Pt. 2

I asked a friend of mine, Michael, to help me with my brainstorming session because he also suffers from anxiety and I thought he may be able to offer some insight. I filled him in on my problem of practice and we just kind of went from there. Here's a summary of how things went (I can't say these are all direct quotes, though I tried to get things down as quickly as I could. I also tried to record our convo but it didn't end up playing back well).

Me: So one of my ideas was to provide more online schooling options for students. I know sometimes parents are unable to be home with their children because they're working but I was thinking a designated place like a quiet room in the school could be helpful.

Michael: That may help but do you think taking them out of school would be a good idea? Don't you think it would make the problem worse?

Me: I have thought about that and even had spoken with one of my instructors about how something like that could possibly hinder the social life of the child. That's not something I want to do at all and my instructor made a great point that there are other ways for them to socialize with their peers.

Michael: I could see that. Maybe, if the child likes sports, they could get involved in a certain sport and that would help them meet friends and socialize. What do you do with those students who have social anxiety and don't have any desire to be around other kids?

IDEATION Pt. 2

Me: That's a good question... I don't really know. I do love your idea of involving them in sports. I know physical activity is supposed to help with anxiety and panic symptoms, so maybe just getting them involved in a physical activity could be helpful.

Michael: Karate! You could have them take Karate! I used to take it when I was a young lad (yes he really said that) and it helped me a lot. I had a hard time focusing on things and it helped me with that.

Me: That's a really great suggestion. I have heard it can help with focus and calming of the mind, which are both two areas that need to be addressed in my problem of practice. So that's definitely one idea. What do you think about maybe still having the child take classes in a quiet, designated space but having them take an art class at The Kalamazoo Institute of Art or somewhere like that? I was toying with the idea of Art Therapy as well. I know when I was in the height of my anxiety, I would put on headphones and paint. It really calmed me down. This way they aren't being completely unsocial and they are able to do something that allows them to shut their mind off for a bit.

Michael: It could work but don't you think, depending on the class size, it could have the same impact as going to school? Isn't that what you're trying to avoid?

Me: Yes, I could see it having that impact but if the instructor is made aware of the situation, the child may be able to sit in the back of the class and interact when they feel comfortable doing so. I don't want to force them to interact with others but I don't want to stop them from it either. I

IDEATION Pt. 2

don't know... I don't want them to be anti-social but I want them to be comfortable and get a solid education.

Michael: Well... the art class thing isn't a bad idea, they don't have to worry about learning certain things or focusing on a certain subject. It's not set up like a traditional learning institute. It may be a great way for them to express themselves. What else have you been thinking about?

Me: So one brainstorming process that was presented to our class was using random words. You would pick random words from somewhere and then try to relate it to your topic. Want to try that? Maybe we could come up with something.

Michael: *Laughs* I will give it my best effort.

Me: That's all I am asking for. So I have a book and I'm just going to flip to a random page and pick a random word. The first word I landed on was "by" and I don't know how we could relate anything to that so I did another random search and got "talking."

Michael: Umm... maybe they could try talking to a counselor?

Me: I thought about that as well but it seems so obvious. Not that I don't recommend it, I think it should absolutely be part of their healing process but I don't know maybe it should be more. Like, maybe they should try talking to their parents about what they're feeling? Then maybe

IDEATION Pt. 2

their parents could gain a better idea of what their child is going through. Though it may be hard for a child to explain those type of feelings, it's hard for me and I'm an adult.

Michael: What if they found a way to communicate with their parents in another way. You were talking about art therapy early and saying that they might gain some socialization by taking an art class but what if they used art to relay their feelings to their parents. Art can be very powerful.

Me: This is true and they use art in child counseling sometimes. So maybe they could use art to relay their feelings to their parents and their counselor. I guess I would just really like the people in their lives to gain a better perspective of what the student is going through. Ok, let's try another word... how about "pressures." I feel there is a lot of pressure placed on students these days, to be the very best and maybe that could lead to some anxiety issues. Maybe these students are having anxiety about a certain subject, like math seems to be a popular one.

Michael: This is where the teacher should be more observant. If they see a kid struggling, they should be reaching out to them and finding a way to get them some tutoring so they don't fall behind in class.

Me: I agree. I think tutors should be on hand in schools anyways, I don't think this is something that should just be specially provided for students with anxiety.... Hmm... I don't know, these words don't seem very challenging. Let me try again... this time I got "barefoot." This actually might be something. I have heard of children having sensory issues and these issues can cause

IDEATION Pt. 2

them to feel anxious. If there is too much noise around them, they don't like the texture of something, etc. I actually have issues with this, I can't handle when things get too noisy I start to feel panicky almost instantly.

Michael: I'm that way as well. I have a difficulty going into stores, restaurants, and places like that with a lot of people in them. It makes me uncomfortable and when the noise level is elevated I bolt out of there.

Me: This is exactly why I thought it would be good for a student to learn in a separate area from other students. It wasn't about me secluding them it was about me wanting to be sensitive to their illnesses and wanting them to get a good education but I digress. The next word I got is "birds."

Michael: When I think birds I think trees and sky, so maybe allowing them to be outdoors more would be comforting to them?

Me: Spending time with nature is actually a great idea. Maybe they could spend some time at the Nature Center or place like that. Seeing the animals may help them to get out of their own mind for a while and let them relax.

Michael: I was thinking more along the lines of reading under a tree outside. Something quiet. They could even do their studying outside, weather permitting of course.

Me: Before I became agoraphobic I loved watching the sky, the animals in my backyard, and even bugs. It may be kind of awesome for them to incorporate spending time outside with art. I

IDEATION Pt. 2

know I'm going back here a lot but even if someone isn't a great artist, it is so calming to just paint, draw, or even take pictures of things. It could turn it into an adventure for the student. I feel like we're getting side tracked a bit. I mean, we have come up with ideas that could help students relax and that is so important but what about the schooling aspect of things.

Michael: I honestly don't know. Unless you proposed a school dedicated to children with issues like anxiety, sensory issues, and other mental illnesses. Could you even do that?

Me: I would love to do something like that but I don't know how probable it would be for something like that to be created. You have a huge issue with funding, unless it was privately funded. You could have classes that were smaller and that were made up of children who all had the same illness. This would allow them to socialize and be around people like them. I kind of love that idea, though I have no idea how something like that would take off the ground.

Michael: Well get to researching!

Me: *Laughs* I will, I will. Though I don't know that my instructors want me to necessarily erect a school, it's still a pretty good idea. I think I will look into the matter further. Maybe other counties or states are doing it.

Michael: Good luck! I hope you are able to help these kids.

Me: Thanks Michael, me too!

IDEATION Pt. 2