

“Andrea”



“Andrea” came to Shift Cognitive Therapy because of a conflict with a new coworker. She was upset that she couldn’t resolve the conflict on her own and that her employer was doing little to help, despite having been with the company for many years.

That felt “like a slap in the face” to Andrea, because she had always put others first even at her own expense. Feeling unimportant, she worried things would get worse. Over time she found it harder to focus and felt anxious. She spiraled into depression and eventually felt suicidal.

We helped Andrea to focus on her thoughts and feelings and discovered negative patterns. She believed she was inadequate, that she had to resolve every problem by herself, and that showing feelings meant she was weak. Unable to resolve the conflict on her own or to tolerate the anxious feelings it created supported her belief that she was inadequate and weak. Asking for help “proved it.”

Working with her psychologist, Andrea realized that those were very old thoughts, formed in childhood as she coped with unhappy parents who fought intensely. She learned to keep these family secrets by hiding her feelings and coping alone. She also played the role of ‘the good girl’ to prevent any further upset. However, unable to fix her parents’ marriage, young Andrea concluded that it was somehow her fault. She figured if only she worked harder, was nicer, got good grades,

then maybe she could make things better. These beliefs took root and she became an adult who masked her feelings, focused only on others, and believed that she was a flawed person whom others would reject unless she won their approval.

Andrea's life changed when she decided, "It's okay to ask for help" and realized that the effort of struggling actually proved she was strong. She and her psychologist identified more realistic ways to think about herself and came up with new strategies to deal with situations in her everyday life. Andrea returned to work successfully and reported feeling happier and more in control because she was learning to take care of herself.

* Based on an actual client. Used with permission.