

# Anxiety – Boundary Issues

*Instructions to the Learner*

**Jordan Milroy** is waiting in the Emergency Room.

You have been asked by your supervisor to take a focused history of their complaint.

**For this case assume patient identity has already been confirmed.**  
**Please identify yourself to the patient at the beginning of the station.**

## Instructions for Simulated Client

**OPENING STATEMENT (Note: to be stated at the start of the station)**

*“I need a note for my boss confirming that I have been sick.”*

### OVERVIEW

You are Jordan Milroy, in your 30s. You are here to get a note for your present illness; it is work policy that more than three days requires a medical note.

You have been experiencing flu-like symptoms for a week and as of today you have missed 4 days of work.

You are still feeling slightly feverish, achy, and fatigued. You have had a cough, headache, sore throat, and are starting to feel better now but would like a couple more days off, “just to be sure”.

### BACKGROUND

#### **Behavior, Demeanor and Appearance**

- This interview is driven by the SC, you are a “gusher”
- You start off by answering the questions in a straightforward, somewhat tentative manner such as: *“I don’t want to bother you, I know how busy doctors are...”*) but you need this note, and you are a little concerned about losing your job too.

- As the interview progresses, you begin to relax and your body language conveys this and you become increasingly effusive (*"I'm so glad to meet someone older than six and younger than sixty! All the teachers at my school are old..."*).
- If the interviewer demonstrates interest in your personal feelings you may think that he/she is really interested in becoming your friend.
- You should **keep moving your chair towards the trainee** in an exaggerated way. Move relatively quickly into the trainee's "personal space". Don't be afraid to "push" them, even getting them so they are backed up against the wall
- **You should touch the interviewer's knee at some point** (This is a friendly move, not a sexual pass. It is important for the role, to provide an overt boundary crossing experience for the learner to respond to – get personal **within the first 2 minutes – Don't wait too long!**).
- You begin changing the subject-asking about him/her instead of answering questions
- You may begin to get personal with the interviewer by asking about their personal life ... for example:
  - *"I've just moved here from Tweed...It's a pretty small place! Where are you from?"*
  - *"I don't know many people here....got a lot of time on my hands so if you'd like to hang out...my family Doc in Tweed was a good buddy/friend of mine....he delivered me....played baseball/bridge with him"*
  - *"How do you meet people?"*
  - *"Are you married?"*
  - *"What is there to do in this city?", "Hey, you look like you might be a baseball/movie fan! Who's your team!? Do you like movies?"*
  - *Asking his/her opinion ("Do you like my blouse/sweater?")*
  - *You think the interviewer is a nice person and so suggest, "Listen, they said I'm your last patient today so let's get out of here and go for a coffee and talk some more" and "I can't believe how easy it is to talk to you". "Hey, maybe you'd like to go see a game/movie!"*

- You are a member of the local hospital's Quality Assurance Committee which meets quarterly. There is a meeting tonight and you would like to invite the doctor to attend with you as you think it could be of interest to him/her.
  - *"It would be an honor to go to the meeting with a doctor who is as good as you." "Tonight the topic is Emergency Room Wait Times...I bet you could really address that issue!! It would be great if you were there!"*

**(This is a great thing for the SC to suggest, even if the learner has tried to set clear professional boundaries, because the SC can be excited that the learner can still attend the meeting as a 'professional')**

- You really like this idea because you could meet first, maybe for a bit of dinner then, travel to the meeting together and then go out for drinks or coffee later to discuss it all, whatever.
- If the interviewer tells you that you are getting personal or tries to stop your friendliness, you will be hurt:
  - *"Oh , I'm so sorry!", "You see I'm always getting myself into trouble this way." "You won't be mad will you?" "It's just that I find you so interesting and nice." "I just don't know how to act in this big city...at home in Tweed we talk to each other...here it seems like I try to be friendly and people think I want something from them."*
- You express some anxiety about how hard it is to find a life for yourself in this city.....spend a lot of time alone...lot's of anxiety about your new teaching job and no-one to share it with...drinking a bit more at night at home just because you are lonely and have no-one to do things with. (7-10 glasses of wine a week....a change for you from 2-3 glasses a week)

**If the physician initiates a head and neck exam, the facilitator should refer to the stem which indicates the physician should take a Focused History.**

#### **Attire**

- Casual

#### **Starting Position**

- Seated

#### **HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS/PROBLEM**

##### **Patient's concerns:**

- You still feel feverish and fatigued, and do not want to bother the doctor but you need the note and are afraid of losing your job.

**History of present illness:**

- You have been experiencing flu like symptoms for a week.

**PAST MEDICAL HISTORY**

- Generally healthy

**SOCIAL HISTORY**

- You are a recently divorced kindergarten teacher with no children. You have lived in the same small town, "Tweed" (half way to Ottawa) all your life (where you *"knew everyone by name and nobody locked their doors"*) until you were suddenly laid off and forced to move to Toronto a couple of months ago
- You are now teaching Grade 3 and have 38 students in your class. It's stressful because there is provincial testing for Grade 3's and this is new for you...before you taught kindergarten. You are working really hard doing lesson plans and are a bit stressed out
- You married your high school sweetheart, whom you dated for several years then married 10 years ago; you were never really involved with another man/woman
- You were separated from your husband/wife two years ago but you and your husband/wife remained "best friends" and continued to see him/her from time to time
- Since your divorce there is a gap in your life, all the men/women you are meeting are either married or involved with someone else, or much older than you
- Even after your divorce you and your husband/wife remained close friends and you really miss him/her. He/she was always someone you could call if you needed to talk. Since the final divorce papers came through you're not so sure that it is appropriate for you to see him/her any more.
- All of your friends and family (parents and sister) are quite a distance away
- You are lonely. You live alone and are not in a relationship

## NOTES FOR THE SC:

Here are some ideas that might help move the interview forward if the learner gets stuck in feeling unable to write a 'Doctor's note'.

- The SC can reinforce that he/she works with kids and because your throat is still a bit sore and you still feel slightly feverish, achy and tired and you really don't want to be passing anything on to the kids.
- SC can say:
  - *"I didn't know about this rule at the school about Dr.'s notes, until I phoned in sick again this morning, otherwise I would maybe have come in earlier. I really don't want to screw up here. I'm a brand new teacher with this school board and I really need this job. There are so many unemployed teachers out there....I'd really hate to screw up my chances of getting re-hired for the fall."*
- If the learner refuses to give you a note, don't let it end the interview. You can tell the learner:
  - *"That's OK...maybe you could just write a note saying I came into the clinic today...or maybe my supervisor can just phone in and verify that I did come in and talk to a Doctor."* You can even compliment the learner on his/her integrity and ask if they have to deal with a lot of people who try to take advantage of them.
- Also, facilitator can reinforce that the learner has been asked to take a history.

***The SC really drives this interview. Try to find ways to keep it going.***