

Case Study #2: Patricio

Patricio liked his job as an electrician's apprentice. He knew that it would lead to a solid job and a fair amount of independence in the long run. He was serious and disciplined around electricity. He had a deep respect for its power and for his boss, John. In Patricio's family, you had respect for the man who signed your paycheck. In this case, he was also a teacher and ticket to a better life. Even so, Patricio couldn't help but notice how his boss treated certain people differently—specifically the white boys whose families had lived in the area for a few generations—like they belonged in a way that he didn't. They were the ones he invited to get a beer with him after work on a Friday. It was as though they were born into special club, for "good old boys" as his boss referred to them. It wasn't that John wasn't nice to him, he was. But it reminded him of how teachers were nice to him when he was growing up. They treated him with a bit of distance that was probably not even noticeable to others. Was it just in his head? Was he imagining it? Or was he perceiving something that no one else took note of?

But then the new kid, Conor, came. He had grown up down the street from John and John seemed to feel that he owed it to Conor's parents to take him on and teach him the skills of the trade. "Okay, but why did he ask me to keep an eye on the kid?", thought Patricio. Conor was a quick study, not on how to do electrical work, but on how to get along with the guys. He had an easy smile and a slightly goofy manner; the others thought that he was a riot.

Patricio wasn't sure what he thought of Conor at first. But before long, he questioned whether Conor even wanted to be an electrician. He just didn't seem that focused and around electricity, that was a problem. There were days when Conor's choices seemed unwise at best and unsafe at worst. Patricio felt unnerved by the need to have to jump in to stop Conor from doing dangerous things and felt uncomfortable that his boss had put him in this position. John treated Conor like he was special and the other guys like him. Patricio thought, "If I jump in on something that Conor is doing in a way that Conor doesn't like, where does that leave me?"

Patricio thought that perhaps he should talk to John, but he wasn't really sure where he stood or how John would take it. Challenging his boss was certainly not his intention or something that he thought was acceptable. He really didn't know what to do, so the days went by. The situation was stressing Patricio out and giving him stomach aches. He wondered if he should just quit and move on.

Consider Patricio's story in light of the session on Amygdala Hijack. Reflect on the questions below:

1. Think about Patricio's past, his values, and his beliefs. What are some sources of trauma that might serve as triggers for him?
2. What emotional challenges either exist now for Patricio or exist as ghosts from his past?
3. Consider what kinds of communication skills Patricio might need as he learns how to interact with John around the situation. What aspects of those skills might he excel at? What might be really hard for him?
4. What challenges and difficulties might arise for Patricio as he tries to deal with the situation?
5. If you could have a conversation with Patricio, what might you wish to say to him?
6. What might you want him to understand about Amygdala Hijack?
7. If you could help Patricio become a "fast fish learner" what are some of the things that you hope he would do in support of his own learning and work performance?

Note: All cases are fictional and any similarities to persons living or otherwise is coincidental.