

Appendix I:1

Vignette one: Elizabeth

Personal details have been altered to protect the client's anonymity

Elizabeth is aged 34. She is married and has an eight-year-old daughter. She runs her own successful hairdressing business.

An impending and necessary visit to the dentist had led to Elizabeth's decision to come to therapy. She had an extreme fear of the dentist with the result that even minor procedures had to be done under an anaesthetic. She had become worried about the effect of numerous anaesthetic procedures on her general health. In addition she reported that on some days, "out of the blue", she experiences severe "waves" of anxiety, resulting in a dry mouth, palpitations and feelings of panic. She also said that she worried a great deal about a variety of situations. She listed her main worries as flying, motor vehicle accidents, crossing the harbour bridge, her daughters safety, hurting herself, being alone, having a major illness, aging, dying, offending others and her partner's death.

These problems were long standing and fluctuated in intensity depending on environmental stress such as work pressure. She described her current situation as supportive with a loving and encouraging husband of whom she said is "my best friend and my rock".

Elizabeth is a middle child. Her father is Dutch and her mother a New Zealander. Her father immigrated to New Zealand after the Second World War where he had narrowly escaped being conscripted into the Nazi army. She described her father as a fussy perfectionist who liked everything in its place. He tended to focus on mistakes and could be somewhat explosive and

unpredictable in his reactions. When he was in his forties he had a “mental breakdown” during which he took to his bed for some months. She tries not to think of this time, as she does not like to think of her father as vulnerable. Her sister suffers from bulimia and her brother is a loner. Her mother was calm and optimistic about life. She had a protected childhood and felt loved by her parents. She hated school and as a shy and timid child found many things in the school environment to dread. As a child she was often unwell and suffered from migraine, hay fever and annual bronchial complaints with repeated bouts of tonsillitis. She was teased at school because she was tiny and “clever”. She did well academically but because of her school experience did not pursue any tertiary education. After completing 6th form she worked on a suburban newspaper but found the interviewing stressful. She has done some personal consultancy work but found this very stressful. She reported many casual jobs such as car washing and working as a waitress.

Elizabeth described herself as someone who made friends easily and has an active social life. She worries about what people think of her and always tries to please others and do the right thing. She is wary of letting others become too close and thinks that people can be mean if they know too much. She drinks approximately two to three glasses of wine in the evening, which she finds “takes the edge off”.

Elizabeth presented as well groomed and fashionably dressed. She engaged well with the therapist and was able to give a clear account of her presenting issues.