Sonya is a 19-year-old heterosexual female whose family comes from Portugal. She is a sophomore in college, which has a primarily white population in Texas. She is the first generation in her family to go to college. You received a referral from Sonya’s doctor, Dr. Smith after she saw her doctor for persistent stomach aches, weight loss, and struggling with eating. She looked slightly older than her stated age. Her speech was rapid and loud, although from what she was saying she did not appear angry or displeased. She dressed neatly and fashionably, and her nails and hair were always done. She states she has a part-time job that helps to pay for school and she has a partial scholarship and grants.

Sonya stated she can always remember having stomach aches, as early as 5 years old, but they have been increasing, especially when moving out of her family’s home and going to college. She states this is her first time in therapy, and she worries that her parents will become angry with her for going to counseling. She mentioned that her stomach felt so bad before coming to the session that she was about to throw up, and she was unsure if she could come.

In speaking with the client, you learn that Sonya’s maternal grandparents immigrated to the United States in the 50s and they now reside in Colorado. In her family culture was very important. Her family is close and before she went off to school her entire family lived together. Growing up her family struggled with poverty, Her grandparents did not speak English, so it was tough to get a job. Her grandfather did construction until he got injured and her grandmother cleaned houses. They helped with some of the bills but had to stop working when Sonya was young due to not being able to keep up physically. Her parents had jobs off and on, but struggled to keep them. She stated they would have to take off due to her stomach issues, needing to take care of the parents that lived with them, car issues they could not afford to fix, and other reasons. Their employers did not care the reason they missed work, which led to them being fired. The meal Sonya received at school was sometimes her only meal, and she worried about that. Sometimes kids would tease her about her clothes that were always worn looking or out of fashion. The teasing brought on a lot of stomach aches, as well as the lean periods when she didn’t know if her parents would be able to make dinner.

Sonya’s parents did not see the value of college and although they did not openly discourage her, they did not support her decision. Sonya saw this as an opportunity to help the family. She moved away, and she struggled through her first year. She attended classes and did well while there, but struggled to get through the reading. Her grades were borderline. She struggled on tests, especially essay questions, and her writing was often criticized by her instructor. In class, though, she participates and shares stories that relate to the material.

After getting a C- in her first class, she noticed that her stomach aches were back, especially while doing homework or studying for a test. It doesn’t help that when she is struggling to understand a test and what is being asked her mind goes blank. She stated she did not sleep well. Although she struggled with the reading in general, she would often struggle to maintain focus on what she was reading because her mind would race with thoughts that she couldn’t do it. She states there have been a few times after taking a test she would go into her room and just lay on the couch because she was so fatigued. She has talked to her parents and they tell her to come up and she finds herself snapping at them.

Sonya has a few acquaintances but does not hang out with too many people. She stated she needs to spend her time studying so she can be successful and help her family out. She sees people having fun on the college green and is envious because she would like to do the same thing.

Sonya took the MMPI-3, she scored at appropriate levels to indicate validity in her responses and all areas were scorable, as she responded to 100% of the assessment items. Most scales appeared within the normal range, but a few scales had clinically significant results which backed up what we noticed during our interview. The scores that were heightened were: emotional/internalizing dysfunction, self-doubt, stress, worry, anxiety-related experiences, family problems, and shyness.