

CASE STUDY

MICHAEL – DEMOGRAPHIC & DEVELOPMENTAL INFORMATION

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



 **Name:** Michael (Hypothetical)

 **Age:** 34

 **Gender:** Male

 **Marital Status:** Married

 **Occupation:** Engineer

 **Referral Source:** Primary Care Physician

 **Presenting Concerns:**
Anxiety, insomnia, irritability, difficulty trusting others, emotional disconnection, marital conflict.

ACE & FAMILY HISTORY

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

-  Parents divorced when he was six.
-  Father struggled with alcoholism and was emotionally unavailable.
-  Mother experienced untreated depression.
-  Frequent verbal conflict in the home.
-  Emotional neglect was common.
-  Parentified – often cared for his younger sister and took on adult responsibilities.

ACE SCORE

5
(High)

Research shows that higher ACE scores are linked to increased risk for anxiety, depression, chronic health conditions, and interpersonal difficulties later in life.

DEVELOPMENTAL TIMELINE

0 – 18 MONTHS Trust vs. Mistrust



- Care was inconsistent and unpredictable.
- Developed a sense of mistrust of others.

18 MONTHS – 3 YEARS Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt



- Emotions often ignored or dismissed.
- Learned to suppress needs to avoid disapproval.

3 – 6 YEARS Initiative vs. Guilt



- Took on adult responsibilities (parentification).
- Felt responsible for keeping peace.

6 – 12 YEARS Industry vs. Inferiority



- Focused on achievement to gain approval.
- Developed self-criticism and fear of failure.

12 YEARS & BEYOND Identity vs. Role Confusion



- Identity based on performance and self-reliance.
- Difficulty connecting with emotions and others.

ATTACHMENT & INTERNAL WORKING MODEL



Attachment Style:
Insecure (Fearful-Avoidant)

Internal Working Model (Core Beliefs):

- People are unreliable.
- My needs are a burden.
- I must handle everything alone.
- If people know the real me, they'll leave.

DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT



Early adversity shaped Michael's emotional development and coping strategies:

- Heightened anxiety and hypervigilance
- Difficulty trusting others
- Emotional avoidance and self-reliance
- Perfectionism and fear of rejection
- Struggles with intimacy and connection

Current symptoms are understood as adaptive survival strategies developed in response to early relational adversity.