Scenario 2 | Ji-woo

Meet Ji-woo

Ji-woo is a 19-year-old woman of Korean decent. She was born in South Korea and moved to the United States with her parents when she was 2 years old. She has many relatives in the United States including aunts, uncles and cousins, but her grandparents and some other extended family members remain in the Korea. She visited them every couple years while growing up and often stayed for several weeks at a time. Ji-woo’s parents describe her as a happy child who was able to enjoy time with friends and family on two continents. Unfortunately, this changed after Ji-woo was in a car accident last summer.

The Accident

Ji-woo was enjoying a high school graduation celebration with friends at a nearby park when the accident occurred. The car in which she was traveling struck a tree at a high rate of speed causing the car to careen into the woods. Ji-woo suffered severe injuries to her back and legs that required multiple surgeries, but her family felt lucky that she survived as one of Ji-woo’s friends died of her injuries the night of the accident.

Ji-woo Struggles with Opiates

As Ji-woo struggled to recover from the accident, she came to rely upon opiate medications that were initially prescribed to help manage her pain. As weeks passed, her physical injuries healed, but she found that the numbing sensation that the opiates provided helped block the pain associated with the loss of her friend and memories of the accident. When her physician refused to refill her prescription, Ji-woo found contacts through a mutual friend who could supply the pills for a price. She found they helped her sleep and gave her a warm feeling that helped her act like her old self. Whenever the pills ran out, she found the memories of the accident became worse and popped into her head when she had quiet moments to herself. She has had some thoughts of hurting herself when she questions why her friend died yet she survived, but with the relief of the pills, she has been able to push those thoughts away.

Ji-woo's Family Interviens

When she was physically well enough to travel, Ji-woo’s grandparents invited her to visit because they were anxious to see her. To everyone’s shock, she refused to travel to the Korea. One of her cousins suggested that it might be because Ji-woo couldn’t get enough pain pills to be away that long. This alarmed Ji-woo’s parents who did not know how or where she could be getting the pills. Searching Ji-woo’s room, they found plastic vials tucked in odd places some empty and some with pills. At their insistence, Ji-woo agreed to meet with a counselor to help explore how she was really handling the accident.