

Imagine that one of your Seminar classmates brought this scenario to Seminar to discuss and was very much wanting help and guidance from the group.

Maria's field placement is in a domestic violence shelter. There are six women and their children living at the shelter currently. Maria has spent a lot of time working with Alice, one of the residents. Alice is a 35 year old white, separated female who has told Maria a very moving and poignant story about her escape from a violent husband and her recovery from drug addiction. Maria takes Alice and her children to medical appointments and to sign up for various services and has provided some supportive counseling. Maria has grown fond of Alice because she's funny, smart and a real survivor. However, Alice seems to get into a lot of conflicts with the other women at the shelter. She is often mad at someone and the other women are often mad at her. Most recently, she came to Maria complaining that the food she buys keeps disappearing.

Maria mentions the disappearing food to Sue, one of the shelter staff. Sue states, "Oh Alice is such a borderline, you can't believe anything she says. Don't get caught up in splitting." Maria was not sure what she meant by this and when she raised the issue with her field instructor, she was informed that Sue's comments referred to "borderline personality disorder." Maria and the field instructor did not have a lot of time to discuss the issue that day and Maria plans to discuss this further in supervision next week. In the meantime, Maria thought this would be a good issue to bring to Seminar. Maria is left wondering about the accuracy of Sue's characterization of the client and what the implications are for her future work with Alice.