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Children as symptomatology of parent's psychic illness

Jizreel Pereira da Silva[1*], Nathália Santos Vieira da Silva[2]†

[1,2]Florescer Therapeutic Space, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
jizreelsilva@yahoo.com.br
*Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7874-1648
†Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2225-8613

Abstract: *The work presents professional approaches for the treatment of families in imbalance, generated by dissatisfaction with the children's attitudes, through symptoms such as pain, irritability, illness, isolation, among other unwanted behaviors in society. We show the idea of family and the family system and its possible relationships for changes in the behavior of members of the family system. The importance of parents in assuming that their children's symptoms are usually generated by the parents' inappropriate attitudes is emphasized, as well as the search for family therapy to condition the balance and healthy environment of the family.*

Keywords: Family; parents; offspring; family therapy; symptoms; therapist.

1. INTRODUCTION

The work addresses aspects of Family Therapy, considering emotions, behaviors and diseases, in family relationships, especially between parents and children. The study is justified by the presentation of symptoms in children as a form of language expressed through parents' conflicts.

Due to the demand of parents concerned with their children, there is a need for interventions to improve communication in the family system, allowing parents to reflect on certain behaviors.

The work consists of the concepts of Family Therapy, the children's responses through the symptoms caused by the parents, the parents' search for therapy to solve the children's symptoms, as well as possible postures of the therapist in the face of the reality of families with relationship problems, in particular parents and children, analyzing the disorders of the systemic organism, placing it in the appropriate state of the family, suffered by the deviation [1].

2. METHODOLOGY

The family is a system that is inserted in another system, the community. For this reason, there will be a need for relationship and communication. In other words, there is a natural influence from a larger system to a smaller one, as well as from the community to the family and from the family to its members.

Minuchin believes in this influence, through his investigation on psychosomatic illness in childhood, as the child presents the symptoms due to stressors that affect the family [1].

Bertalanffy in 1940 believed that the family is a complex system and combined systems thinking and concepts from Biology, starting the General Systems Theory, with the aim of investigating more complex social systems. It also considers social groups as organisms in the form of open systems, as they constantly interact with the environment [2].

Since the family is a system, the way it happens, whether functional or dysfunctional, will change the entire system.

A family that integrates in a functional way is one that can perform basic functions, as well as the development of its components, in a calm and flexible way against bad possibilities under the circumstances, but conscious in decision-making, learning and growth of all, which generates quality of emotional health and the balance of this system.

The dysfunctional family system is when conflicts, destructive postures and certain impositions occur on the part of the members that make up this system, this dysfunction is due to the malfunction of the family system, which presents in its functions an alteration generating damage, usually in those who cannot express or even defend themselves from such dysfunctional behaviors.

Based on this thought, it is possible to observe that the family environment, as well as the participation of the components in the integration of the system, is fundamental for the psychic development of each individual.

Dysfunctional families are responsible for a good part of the results in adult life, whether they are experienced positively or negatively, due to this bias that we observe, many adults suffering, living a life of abuse and addiction, reprehensible behaviors, they are unable to establish bonds, some have some type of mental disorder. Situations like these, generated in a family environment, grow in an unbalanced way. Therefore, the need for family therapy arises.

Family therapy began in the middle of the twentieth century, due to the need to understand the individual and his relationship, in particular the family. Family therapy is characterized by working with the whole family and not just the individual, approaching relationships in a therapeutic way [2].

Every family has its own identification and model of life. Every family has an environment and not every environment is often favorable to the components, because it cannot be said that a family is totally healthy or totally pathological [3].

In order to have a better identification of a favorable environment for the components, Minuchin, when developing the structural therapy of the family, analyzes families with efficient functionality to understand the emergence of difficulties, due to the transcendence of the cultural barrier and from this analysis, traces a pattern of normality to later verify the deviation [1].

Minuchin considers it as a set of theories and techniques to approach the individual in the social context inserted. He believes that family therapy leads to changes in the organization of the family:

> When the structure of the family group is transformed, the positions of the members in that group are consequently altered. As a result, the experiences of each individual change [1].

The condition is increasingly linked to various cardiovascular diseases, particularly ischemic heart disease (IHD), where uric acid may play a role in inflammation, endothelial dysfunction, and the development of atherosclerosis [3,4].

For Winnicott, the family is the space of welcome and health, but families do not always present the necessary conditions for the good development of the components [4].

Winnicott describes stages for the process of emotional development, such as absolute dependence of the baby in relation to the environment, relative dependence which occurs through the perception of a world external to the child, through the tolerance of the care offered by the family environment until reaching the last stage which is independence, which for Winnicott, the human being is never completely independent of the environment [5].

The family environment is generated by the parents, through a routine created by the necessary activities, but also in what they like and believe they do. Attitudes that leave an unharmonious environment on the part of parents will certainly cause children to develop a behavior of repudiation, that is, a form of self-defense, because if harmony is desired, then the children who are the center of the family will act in a balanced way and will be affected by frustrations, developing symptoms in the form of protesting that that environment is not healthy [6].

Based on the therapeutic experiences of Aberastury, he believes that the child's illness is governed by unconscious attitudes of the parents, who often behave as rival children in search of a solution to their problems they are experiencing [7].

When the family environment does not condition the necessary or ideal provisions for the child's development, it begins to reflect through the child's symptoms, the disorders of this environment, which will demand the search for intervention to equate it in a therapeutic way [4].

Freud, one of the pioneers in family therapy, publishes an article in 1909 on "*Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy*", which deals with the case of a boy named Hans and through the collaboration of the boy's father to deal analytically with the case, Freud stated that:

> …The treatment itself was carried out by the child's father, and it is to him that I owe my most sincere thanks for allowing me to publish his observations on the case (...). No one else could, in my opinion, have persuaded the child to make any such statements as hers; the special knowledge by which he was able to interpret the remarks made by his five-year-old son was indispensable; without him, the technical difficulties in the path of applying Psychoanalysis to a child as young as this would have been unavoidable. It was only because the authority of a father and that of a physician were united in one person, and because affective affection and scientific interest were combined in him, that it was possible, in this one example, to apply the method to a use for which he himself would not have lent himself, had things been different [8].

In the case of Hans, it is clear the importance of the father's participation, not only in helping the child, but also in providing subsidies to the therapist, in order to achieve homeostasis in the family system.

For Priszkulnik, he believes that when parents frequently seek the therapist to talk about their child, this search may be a "masked" problem of the parents, through the children's symptoms.

Which, through "listening", will allow the therapist to analyze the question posed through the child, in order to formulate the anguish when the "mask" falls apart [9].

It is common to see children referred by their parents with a "problem", they report everything that bothers their children and are able to point them out one by one, demonstrating and emphasizing it as if the child were the family's problem.

Usually parents start by complaining about their child, seeking help to solve their child's difficulty and little by little through "listening" the therapist observes that there are other difficulties not only of the child, but of the parents themselves. With this, the therapist will make a list of the problems of the parents and the children, putting the words in the proper places, because one may be speaking for the other.

When the child is welcomed and listened to not only by what has been said, but by observing his behavior, gestures and looks, it is perceived that in fact the child is only the symptom of that dysfunctional system, the child with his behavior has the ability to denounce the malfunctioning of this system in which he is inserted, It is as if this child works like a sponge, absorbing and capturing everything that is offered in the family environment.

Parents also signal the way their children react in their emotions, such as irritability, motor agitation, with ready and challenging responses, others present introversion, difficulties with speech and expression of feelings, demonstrating melancholy. There are demonstrations of malfunction in somatic form, with manifestations of psychosomatic diseases.

These diseases are manifestations of various emotional symptoms at the unconscious level of unbalanced thoughts and emotions, some children have dermatitis, abdominal pain, headaches, among others, emphasizing that these signs in the form of symptoms are of emotional origin, originated by the family environment in which the child is inserted.

Many children suffer physical violence, destructive punishment, psychological pressure, are threatened, witness conflicts from their parents and feel fear, through possibilities such as parental divorce.

Brun points out that for each attempt by parents to explain their children's symptoms, it is shown by the children's innocence and the impossibility of conscious understanding. In certain cases, there will be resistance on the part of the parents to the feeling of guilt, manifested or hidden, which impairs the therapeutic treatment. Brun points out:

> Whatever the reason for the consultation and the nature of the symptoms, most parents imagine that their child will open his heart or reveal family secrets, and they can't help but question him to find out what happened. But in these fears that invade their thoughts, parents fail to notice the reappearance of their own childish curiosity, however willing they may be to acknowledge their vanity. Like all self-respecting parents, they hope and at the same time fear that the closed space of the session offers the child an incentive to speak and play without inhibitions, so that the psychoanalyst can perceive the symptoms that led them to the office and be able to remedy them [10].

For Zornig, there is no possibility of excluding parents from the analysis, since the children's symptom is caused by their parents. It also argues that it is necessary to preserve the individual spaces of both parents and children and the guidance of parents is shown as a possibility of joint intervention, in view of the dependence of the children until they reach the therapist [11].

If parents seek care to solve their children's symptomatic problems, it is necessary for parents to understand the need to expose the details and listen to the therapist's direction, which can often cause discomfort, in view of the acceptance that they are having inappropriate behaviors, thus evidencing the actions of their children.

When parents accept and identify with part of the problem, the child ceases to be a symptom and starts to be seen as a door of adjustments to the family system, leaving the conflict zone and discovering the management door, where they will develop teamwork in search of the functional system in a healthy way.

It is important for parents to understand the therapeutic process and develop the function of containing their children's anguish, a function initially performed by the therapist [12].

For Motta, the therapist must contain the anguish of parents and children in the work of guidance, as there will be transformation in a pacified and understood way, and parents can perform with their children, under the guidance of the therapist [13].

It is important that the therapist guides the parents in a professional way, directing the steps to be taken so that all family members are accompanied, in order to assume their responsibilities, always thinking about the collective good, and that we are integrative beings and dependent on each other.

3. Final Considerations

For children to grow up in a healthy way, it is necessary that they are inserted in a healthy, balanced family environment, because as there is a bond between the members of the family system, any disorder causes the impact and usually children feel and respond through symptoms.

If parents are concerned about wanting the best for their children, it is necessary to seek the family therapist, as they will often identify signs that are the generators of conflicts. Parents must understand the need to change inappropriate behaviors, respecting the treatment guidelines, if they really want to have a healthy family environment.

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