Play Therapy

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Introduction

The social acceptance of children with intellectual disabilities was studied by research using socio-metric measures. In their review of research, Freeman and Alkin (2000) and Siperstein, Norins and Mehler (2006) conclude that these children are generally less accepted socially than their typically developing peers. As several Meta-analyses, it is also the case for children with learning difficulties and more generally special needs (Nowicki, 2003). Research shows that these children are rarely appointed as friends and preferred game partners by their classmates (Kemp & Carter, 2002). These data suggest that social integration is even more of a problem for this group of students as for typically developing children.

Play has played a pivotal role in the psychological, emotional and educational development of children. Play is the natural way for children to know the world. It is well known that young children know the world through play and creative experimentation. But to see them grow up and want to prepare for the future, they are cloistered in the classroom and to fill them with information away from the game are innate, also distancing them from their natural instincts. Studies have shown that children's play is of particular importance in shaping the character and habits of the child (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990). Through play activities, children develop their personalities and enrich their ties and social manifestations. The study and
observation of children's play is a valuable means of understanding the psychology of the child and their development.

Bundy et al (2007) has shown that when intervention of play and socialization is applied to children with Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), almost half of the children in the experimental group (47%), that is to say those who received play therapy and intensive socialization treatment (more than 40 hours per week), arrive at a level comparable to that of their non-working peers with autism, allowing them to enter the formal education system without the need for assistance and a gain of 30 IQ points on average, after three years of treatment. Unlike children in the control group, which are themselves only 2% to achieve the same results. Meanwhile, the other half of the experimental group had significant improvements. The study included three groups of children who were diagnosed with autism independently by doctors or psychologists. All children were under 4 years before starting treatment. This study has since been widely criticized, but follow-up studies do when these same children were 12 years old (Leong & Carter, 2008), or became adults confirmed that those in the experimental group had maintained their gains without further intervention as opposed to subjects in the control group. Other scientific research has confirmed the efficacy of this treatment for young children with SPD (Anderson & Romanczyk, 1999), it allows them to improve the social, emotional, educational and intellectual plan.

Case Study

This case study shows that the family violence does play an important role in the psychological make-up of a child and his/her personality development. This case study also shows that family violence is an important factor of brain disorder in children.
This is the story of a 6 years old boy Richard Townsend who lived with his father Tom. Tom had divorced his wife and somehow managed to get Richard’s custody. Tom was the foreman in Ford Motor Company and usually do not have much time to nurture Richard or to solve his problems. Rather he tends to show rejecting and punitive parenting behavior when he is in pressure and Richard has to share the strain of his job. Richard was continuously assaulted by his father.

First, the boy tried to ignore this violence and then gradually started to show aggressive and criminal attitudes despite, as I know, all the efforts of his teachers and friends. The mental and physical abuses of his father were starting to affect his personality development. He also experiences extreme difficulty in following instructions of the teachers at school and the instructions of other children during play time and often fails to complete his everyday activities or schoolwork. He also becomes much disorganized and usually has untidy room and school desk. He also regularly loses his school stationery and notebooks and the things for play. He loses things because he has problem sustaining attention and dislike tasks that require this skill and will try to keep away from the school tasks. One of the major change appears in his personality is distractibility, which indicates that he is frequently paying attention to irrelevant happenings, outside noise, other children’s appearance, and thoughts instead of focusing on the tasks given to him, which makes him to fail to complete his own tasks.

The causes of violent and disorganised behaviour of Richard can be traced by delving into the depths of his background. Brain disorder like ADHD and violent behaviour of a person is not a simple phenomenon and there are several factors which play their part in this disorder; this is the reason that there is no simple and straight forward solution available to reduce it. Such
mental disorder and antisocial behaviour may harm other persons in particular and the whole society in general.

The process of child development involves the numerous processes and methods which enable a child to experience and undergo stages which are mandatory for his effective development to transform him into an individual to compete with the challenges and tedious tasks that he is going to further encounter in life. The development in itself is an extremely sensitive matter, primarily because of the delicate nature of a child’s mind (Meadows, 2001).

Child development is mainly conducted on three core principles which play the most crucial role in the future personality makeover of an individual, these stages include physiological, psychological and sociological aspects of child growth. It is important to mention here that is through the combination and effectual synchronization of different forces and their proper organization which helps in the proper development of a child. These fundamental agents constitute physiological, psychological and social institutions (Slee & Shute, 2003).

Human infant lacks the skill and knowledge necessary to survive and transmit culture. All societies rely on the family to provide the child with cultural fundamentals. Thus, family background and values play important role in the making of the personality and behaviour of a person. The family background and the home environment have played a major role in the educational achievement of a child. It is a common knowledge that children who grow up in a violent family not only witness aggression; they often bear the burnt of it. Hence, proper and timely intervention, to avoid the domestic violence and to repair the relationship of children with their parents, is necessary for the personality development of children as well as for the betterment of their future life.
Family or Parental behaviour may make an important contribution in the personality and character building of an individual. In one study, for example, emphatic concern for others at age thirty-one was greater for those subjects whose family life at age five was characterized by high scores on four factors: father’s involvement in child care; mother tolerance of the child’s dependent behaviour; her inhibition of the child’s aggression; and her satisfaction with the maternal role (Koestner et al., 1990). On the other hand, Family abuse and violence surely act as a destructive force in our society. They produce consequences that sometimes reverberate throughout the victim’s lives and even in future families. Victims of incest suffer alienation and other emotional difficulties into adulthood (Akers & Jensen, 2007). Abused and neglected children are more likely to become violent, criminal adults (Alexander et al, 1991). In general, abused children like Richard show a variety of difficulties, including aggressiveness, problems relating to peers, lack of empathy, depression, and trouble in school. Richard’s own behaviour seemed to have little long-term significance, although more disobedience in the home was associated with lower levels of emphatic concern in adulthood.

Violence among the family members is very common. Sociologists estimate that wives are occasionally beaten in percent of families, regularly battered in 3.4 percent (Straus & Gelles, 2002). Abuse occurs in every conceivable form among family members, from wives beating their husbands to children beating their parents or grandparents. Tragically, child abuse is not a rare occurrence. It is estimated that each year in the United States over a million children are physically abused and over 150,000 are sexually abused (Gelles & Cornell, 2005). National Survey data indicate that over 60 percent of rape victims are under eighteen (Kilpatrick et al, 2007).

Therapeutic Play Intervention
Throughout history, family violence is considered as an indoor problem. Causes of this problem cannot be confined to the dominant medical model criteria (Dutton, 2006). This may be associated with specifically to physical and mental health of the entire family. The consequences are devastating like breathing difficulties, disorders of attention and concentration ability, incontinence, depression, uncontrollable tremors, diverse fears, learning difficulties, feelings of guilt, confusion, nightmares, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction; anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, physical disorders (injuries, headaches, gynecological problems, disability, fractures, etc.), stress to reach lethal consequences, such as homicide or suicide (McCue, 2008).

Family Violence is, as already mentioned, a social problem. Therefore, to address it requires professionals from different disciplines, intervening in all dimensions of the problem. Castelino (2009) presented an effective framework to provide social interventions to the victims of domestic and family violence. The complexity of family violence in contexts of crisis requires rethinking traditional ways of thinking about management and strategic ways, enhancing the capabilities of those affected by violence. First understand that the role of children is essential when thinking in the intervention and call for help. The identification of cases has been made since the detection of behavioural problems and / or performance.

When Richard was diagnosed with aggressive and violent behaviour and ADHD, his father, Tom, was compelled to consult a therapist. The therapist had a meeting with Richard and found that he is much willing to live a normal life. This is the good beginning because when patient himself wants to be treated and cured he always fights back with his full might to shrug off the disability he has.
The therapist diagnosed that socializing and play Therapy tends to improve the comportment of Richard in his social environment and a better resolution of conflicts arising. In addition to psycho education used to overcome depression, resp. symptom management, therapy includes treatment of interpersonal conflicts underway in all four areas:

1. Inability to mourn, disruption of the grieving process following losses or changes in the context of life of the depressed person;
2. Changing role in the life of the depressed person (maternity, unemployment, ...);
3. Interpersonal conflict (partner, friends, etc..) and
4. Interpersonal deficit (e.g. loneliness, isolation)

Socialization and play therapy is based on a scientific approach and uses the principles of fundamental research. This intervention provides a framework for learning. It showed that every child learns naturally by its relationship with his physical and social environment. People with developmental disabilities and behaviour, including autistic children have learning difficulties. They need help to develop basic learning. Their difficulties in communication, interaction, socialization difficulties give their adaptation and integration. The existence of disruptive behaviour is interfering with relationships with their environment and prevents the independence, autonomy, freedom of action. Therefore, it is the behaviour sufficiently adapted to enable it to integrate into society. In the long term, it is to set up a life to independence, academic and professional social integration, In the medium term, it is to install intermediate steps required to complete the project life (i.e. dress himself, knowing how to identify the street, know how to respond to the instructions). In the short term, we need to target specific conduct to organize tasks more complex behaviours.
Play is the "as if" of reality, while taking consciousness of fiction. The fiction implies opposition to the role of the real and allows the child / break free from the constraints that reality imposes to act and work with their own rules and regulations. Play is serious business, because it activates all the resources and capabilities of personality. The game for the child is equivalent to the work for the adult. For the hits in the game improves children’s self-esteem, assertiveness is a mechanism of personality. Although play can be seen as a form of rest and lack of effort, we can see that this may involve a lot of effort. Many games have strict rules, and activities seeking expensive or difficult, while at other times elapse between repetitions and quiet with no other intention than to obtain pleasure. But for there to play and for the child to have fun overcoming obstacles to play an important role, and it seems necessary because otherwise fall into boredom.

Studies from different epistemological perspectives allow us to consider the play as a key part of comprehensive child development (Weininger & Daniel, 2002) as it saves systematic connections with what is involved, i.e., with the development of man in other planes such as creativity, problem solving, learning social roles etc., that is, with many cognitive and social phenomena. The findings of these studies show that the play is a vital and indispensable activity for human development, contributing to the development psychomotor, affective, social and intellectual.

According to Piaget theory, child started playing at the age of 1 to 4 months. Piaget (1952) has said that what children play was as critical as their ability to imitate and provide an indicator of his or her developing cognitive capacity. The make-belief plays of children, prior to 2 years of age, demonstrated their confidence in using the acquired schemes in make-believe situations and interaction. As play changes, one will see the important shifts in a child’s use of
symbols. Over the first three years of life, children use objects in very realistic way in their plays. But as he grew older, a child becomes more and more creative (Crocker et al, 1983).

With the help of play, the child learns because he gets new experiences, because it is a chance to make right and wrong, and to apply their knowledge to solve problems. The game encourages the development of thinking skills, creativity and makes learning potential areas. At the intellectual level, development or fiction simulation game incorporates many cognitive development trends, all related to the development of a less concrete and more coordinated thought while building on the convergent and divergent thinking (Hughes, 2003), and are a support for the development of many cognitive operations such as correspondence, conservation, classification, reversibility, and perspective taking.

The play is a learning resource that creates areas of potential development. Beyond being a source of learning activity. Play creates potential development areas in the game noting that children / as using resources more evolved than in other types of activity. The play is a stimulus for attention and memory. The own game conditions force the child to focus on objects of game situation, on the argument that has to interpret or content of actions, because who does not follow closely the game situation, who do not remember the rules the game or do not assume the symbolic use of certain objects will be ejected.

The desire to play with others, sharing the symbolism becomes necessary, stimulating progress, its evolution from the initial egocentric representation ever closer to reality. When the game becomes symbolically collective it must coordinate different views on the actions, the meaning of objects and it involves coordinating the criteria themselves with other criteria, which facilitates the process of decentralization. Play originates and develops imagination and
creativity. There have been many researchers who have drawn attention to the close connections between play and creativity. Play is in a way the history of the word, the first way of naming reality. You can develop the role of language games, which are dedicated to the children with great pleasure, as they are one of the basic forms of language learning. The child develops this activity fun with language in the monologues, fictional or real dialogues etc. The game explores the possibilities of their linguistic repertoire and paralinguistic (tone, rhythm, modulation etc.).

Play is a source of learning because it stimulates action, reflection and expression. This activity allows the child to investigate and discover the world of objects, people and their relationship. Children learn with games, investigate and discover the world around them, structuring it and understanding it. There is no difference between playing and learning, because any game that present new demands must be considered as a learning opportunity, nay, in the game the children learn with remarkable ease because they are especially prone to receive what they offers playful activity which engaged with pleasure. Furthermore, attention, memory and wit are sharpened in the game, and all the learning that when they play will be transferred later to the playful situations.

The therapist further clarifies that Sand play and Creative Visualization therapies would be more fruitful in the case of Richard. The sand play therapy was created by an English paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Margaret Lagerfeld, just after the Second World War. It was created to help children with brain disorders and who faced the difficulty of communicating in a multilingual environment. During a seminar in London, Dora M. Kalff, then student of the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung, discovered the game world and quickly understand the value and potential of this therapeutic tool (Kalff, 2003).
She decided to adapt this technique and named it "sand play" by changing some elements of the framework, and redefining the relationship between client and practitioner. Unlike Margaret Lowenfeld, she defined that, when the staging of the game allows good access to the deep emotions of the individual and their externalization, the transfer principle and against-transfer between the client and the therapist is part of the process. Sand play therapy is first used as a diagnostic tool but it soon became a tool for development and growth in its own right (Kalff, 2003).

Due to its non-verbal dimension, Sand play therapy is particularly suitable for small children like Richard. It does not require special skills and offers the possibility of passing through sensory exploration, play, and symbol, depending on the capacity development of individual expression. The Sand play therapy gives access to deeper layers of the unconscious, allowing the expression of content from the preverbal stage (Hale, 2000). Not limited to, the sand play therapy is relevant in cases of depression, burnout, attachment disorders, behavioural problems, hyperactivity, PDD / ASD, selective mutism, trauma, anxiety, school failure, enuresis etc. This therapy provides a means of exploration, communication, and an invitation to the verbalization in a privileged relationship with the therapist that welcomes and supports the individual in his own way.

Richard’s therapist explained to Tom that sand Play therapy uses the natural elements of sand and water and symbolic figures to shape images rising from the depths. It makes Richard able to contact with his unconscious creating visual images and thus initiate a healing process. In a free and protected by the therapist space, psyche can do its work, which restores the balance between conscious and unconscious and natural healing abilities in Richard not only in his internal world, but in the outside world (Hale, 2000).
Richard meets the therapist for fifty minutes with his sandplay game, whose function is to contain the free expression of what is at stake for Richard, the mobilization of creative energy, and support this process through its protection and understanding. The therapeutic relationship allows Richard to open in confidence, create and drop in his inner world. His father Tom is not present. For fifty minutes, the story weaves. The staging of the game allows the therapist to access and externalizing the deep emotions of Richard. The transfer principle and against-transfer between the patient and the therapist is part of the process.

In the therapy, Sand tray issued which is a wooden tray of 72 cm x 57 cm and 7 cm, placed on a coffee table. It contains fine sand which can be dry or wet. The tank bottom is blue, can be used to include water or sky, if the patient so desires. Therapist told Richard that he is free to explore the sand and many figurines found on the shelves. He can simply touch the sand as the press, the hammer, the sculpt, bury, wet, etc. He may also, in addition to figurines, create himself his own items with clay, raffia etc. After fifty minutes, Richard left the meeting with therapist in the image of the scene he has created, then the analyst photograph the scene and clears. Therapist attentive and caring presence, perimeter security and privacy puts in place allow the staging of very deep content, host of symbolic expression of the psyche and the implementation of restorative autonomous forces of Richard. The transfer principle and against-transfer between the patient and the therapist is part of the process. Therapist told Richard that at the end of the treatment process, he can review the images he created, and connect with the help of the analyst, with its indoor and outdoor events that occurred during therapy.

The technique of Creative Visualization was started becoming popular in 1970s when Shakti Gawin has authored a book on this technique. In this technique visualization is used to create a better future which the person imagines for himself. Visualization is directed towards a
goal (Gawin, 2002). During his creative visualization therapy session, Richard sits in a state of relaxation and is guided by the therapist. Richard is invited into his inner world. On a theme defined by him or the therapist, a story unfolds in a fantasy setting. It is in a suitable location to the theme of the meeting - landscape, home, etc. - and observes the elements present in the image - landscapes, people, animals, objects, plants - appearing spontaneously or implied. It suggests the Richard to begin to move, act or interact with these objects or characters: up, down, to, talk, ask, etc. Situations and objects are the projections of its interior spaces. They can represent concrete situations of physical life as Richard imagines them in general creative visualization, but they can be symbolic, as well as the elements of a night dream.

This entry in the internal fantasy world is a great way to explore other dimensions of self-esteem and other domestic areas. Also, the images that appear are like those of nocturnal dreams, revealing the play of psychic forces of Richard, his deep feelings, unresolved, even unknown to him because they are repressed. Richard is conscious and attention is directed to the window of his imagination, while chatting with the therapist and collecting his concrete environment. So that the therapist can question him about what he sees in the dream. These insights are not an analysis methodology and therapeutic sense, but rather the discovery and understanding of the visual and emotional feeling.

The therapist also suggests more new elements that appear in the image, and propose actions or interactions. This is called guided imagery. This allows Richard to experience imaginary behaviour; he does not dare do in ordinary life, like talking to someone when he feels inhibited. Inducing changes consisting to soothe internal conflicts exceed inhibitions downplay fears; guided imagery is a tool for transformation. An imagined experience sows seeds in the unconscious and transforms domestic programs as a concrete experience. The therapist
encourages the quality manifestation of the most beautiful resorts and the highest of the person, those who bring autonomy, self-expression and creativity, joy and pleasure. Also, in an imaginary situation that reveals his fears and anxieties, it is particularly interesting to stimulate deep inner strengths, and encourage them to implement.

Therapist makes it clear in the beginning that the duration of this therapy is variable depending upon the personality, personal history, family and community, the environment, and initial difficulties of the patient. This is a substantive work that embraces the whole personality. Richard and Tom both agreed to take the weekly sessions and within the span of three months, changes begin to be visible in Richard’s personality and behaviour.

Conclusion

This case study shows that family violence has long lasting effects on Children’s personality and may cause different brain disorders. In this particular case, the professionals involved must consider the position of power, so it must be wisely implemented, by the impact of practices, attitudes and words can mean in the lives of people, and more particularly in the everyday life of Richard. It is necessary to plan, proper and timely intervention, to avoid the domestic violence and to repair the relationship of children with their parents, which is essential for the personality development of children as well as for the betterment of their future life.

This case study also shows that play therapies, especially sandplay and creative visualization therapies, in case of Richard, can surely act as a learning tool and can be used not only to stimulate creativity but as a way of transforming negative emotions. It is an important vehicle having children to learn and assimilate new concepts, skills and experiences, which is why we can say without fear of error, that it is a primary tool for education.
Bibliography


