

PARABLES AS A TRANSCULTURAL TOOL FOR A PSYCHOLOGIST'S WORK WITH THE REQUESTS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT

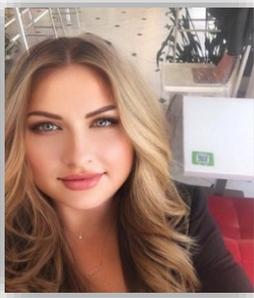


Ganna Naydonova

Ph.D. (Psychology), Psychologist, Associate Professor of the Chair of Special Psychology and Medicine, Department of Special and Inclusive Education, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Email: h.o.naydonova@npu.edu.ua

ORCID: [0000-0002-6679-0469](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6679-0469)



Iryna Uninets

Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy), Basic Consultant of Positive Psychotherapy, Associate Professor of the Department of Practical Psychology, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Email: germanirina777@gmail.com

ORCID: [0000-0002-1690-6590](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1690-6590)

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Abstract

Parables are considered to be an effective tool in a psychologist's work with parents of children with abnormal development. As a kind of metaphor, parables actuate neurodynamic mechanisms of the personality's reflection of actual life issues. The use of parables is specific, depending on the psychodynamic stage of the family with a child who has some developmental problems. The requests of parents of children with abnormal development were classified and the parables were matched to each underlying request type. The use of various options of work with stories by psychologist in the therapeutic process is possible. The authors give some examples of parables at the end.

Keywords: parable, metaphor, abnormal development, transcultural approach, positive psychotherapy

Introduction

Metaphors are effectively used in modern psychotherapy and psychological counselling (Tay, 2013, 2014; Törneke, 2017, 2022). Krotenko & Naydonova consider that metaphor is an

effective psychological tool that actuate neurodynamic mechanisms of personality's reflection of actual life issues. The metaphorical language allows a psychotherapist or counsellor to convey relevant messages to the client in a sufficiently safe form and unobtrusively suggest options for solving the problem (Krotenko,

Naydonova, 2022, p.110). The peculiarities of the use of the metaphor in psychological work with parents of children with impaired physical development are: 1) the metaphor transmits hidden meanings from one person to another; 2) metaphoric image allows to see a new content in what is well known and to transfer this content beyond the area in which it was produced. (Krotenko, Naydonova, 2022, p. 110-111).

N. Törneke (2017) identifies three basic therapeutic strategies of metaphor usage in psychotherapy: 1) help the client discern the relationship between what he does and the problematic consequences he experiences; 2) help the client discern his own thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations by establishing an observational distance from them as they emerge; 3) help the client use this skill to clarify what is important in his life and what would be concrete steps in that direction.

Metaphors can be applied in counselling parents of children with developmental problems in several variants: 1) reading and discussing parables, stories, etc. together with parents; 2) discussion of drawings-metaphors and creating stories about them; 3) work with metaphorical cards (Krotenko, Naydonova, 2022).

So, parables are one of the types of metaphors, they also could be used by psychologists. N. Pezeschkian (2016) proposed the use of parables, oriental stories, etc. in transcultural psychotherapy, stories or parables can be used in helping the client to rethink actual life situation. Deliberate use of parables in psychotherapy changes the client's position by providing access to intuition and fantasy. Stories are used intentionally in positive psychotherapy within a five-step treatment process. N. Pezeschkian mainly turns to parable functions that cause changes in life attitudes, so he divide them into two groups: stories that affirm existing norms and stories that question the permanence of existing norms. In his opinion there are eight functions of parables in therapy: 1) mirror function - the metaphorical images of stories relate to the inner world of a client and facilitate identification with it; 2) model function - stories are viewed as models that reflect conflict situations and offer ways to resolve them; 3) mediation function - story becomes the intermediary between client and therapist; 4) experience storage function - due to metaphoricity, the stories are easily remembered and continue their functioning in the client's daily

life; 5) bearers of tradition function - the stories capture cultural and family traditions, the traditions of a particular social community and individual traditions as a result of life experience; 6) assistance in returning to earlier stages of individual development function - using different types of metaphors in psychotherapy helps to relieve tension, establish warm, friendly and trusting relationships between the client and the therapist; 7) alternative concepts function – story as the way of communication involving the exchange of concepts; 8) position change function - stories evoke a new experience, a change of position.

In brief, Combs & Freedman (1990) listed these functions of stories in the psychotherapy: developing a relationship; gathering information; accessing and utilizing resources; suggesting ideas; reframing; facilitating new patterns of thoughts, feelings and behavior.

Methodology

Theoretical analysis and generalization of data of scientific research has been conducted to distinguish the types of requests which are typical for parents of children with abnormal development. The generalization of practical experience of psychotherapists and counsellors of the usage of metaphorization in the therapeutic process were used for the highlighting of methodological aspects of the use of parables as a tool for a psychologist's work with the requests of parents of children with abnormal development in a transcultural approach.

Results

The psychologist's work with the requests of parents of children with abnormal development requires some tools that will assist in overcoming some specific features of psychological work with the family of such a child. In general, scientists identify two groups of tasks that should be addressed while counselling parents of children with developmental problems. The first group of tasks is the creation of psychological conditions for parents to adequately perceive the situation associated with problems in the development of their child, the creation of their psychological readiness for long-term work on his/her development, correction and education. The second group of tasks includes issues related to releasing parents from feelings of guilt,

overcoming the stressful state of the family (primarily, the oppressed, often depressed state of the mother), creating and maintaining, if possible, a normal climate in the family (Shulzhenko, 2017; Podkorytova, 2020).

As the practice of psychological work with parents of children with abnormal development shows, all their requests fit into these two task groups: 1) difficulties arising in the process of educating and raising a child when the child does not cope with the educational program; inadequate behavioral reactions of the child (negativism, aggression, oddities, unmotivated fears, disobedience, uncontrollable behavior; inharmonious relationships with peers (healthy children are "burdened", embarrassed by a sick brother or sister, subject them to ridicule and humiliation; at school, kindergarten, other children offend them, do not want to be friends with them, call them stupid or "fool", etc.); underestimation of the child's capabilities by the specialists. Parents complain that the educator or teacher underestimates the capabilities of their child, at home the child shows the best academic results. 2) inadequate interpersonal relations of close relatives with a sick child: in some cases, relatives feel sorry for a sick child, over-protect and "caress" him/her, in others they do not maintain relations with a sick child. On the part of a sick child, rudeness or aggression towards relatives may be manifested. Broken marital relations between the mother and father of the child, emotional rejection by one of the parents of a child with developmental disabilities, in extreme cases, refusal even of his/her material support may occur. A comparative assessment by the mother (father) of the relationship of the spouse (wife) toward a child with developmental disabilities and toward normal children (positive or negative, feelings of jealousy, anger, aggression are possible), etc.

The use of parables to solve the problems involved in the psychologist's work with parents of children with impaired development depends on the psychodynamic stage of the family at the time of contacting the psychologist. There are 4 stages in total, which replace each other and are characterized by various emotional manifestations of family members (feelings of anxiety, confusion, helplessness, etc.) and the search for different ways of adaptation (method of trial and error, reassessment of values, etc.) (Shulzhenko, 2017).

During the first stage, which is characterized by a state of confusion, a feeling of helplessness, and guilt, the therapist can use parables that show that in a similar situation, other people will feel the same way. The purpose of their use will be to reduce the feeling of isolation associated with the experience of guilt. Also, parables can give parents a new cognitive basis for experiencing guilt and limit the parents' feelings of being personally responsible for their child's problems.

In the second stage - the parents' denial of the reality of problems in the child's development that have been identified by specialists - parables gently help to realize the real state of affairs. At the third stage - a state of depression associated with the gradual awareness of the child's developmental problems - may develop. It is important to work with a sense of shame. Here the therapist can use parables aimed at the development of collaboration, parables that will help parents realize and express their sense of shame, parables that will help emphasize the beneficial areas of family life.

At the fourth stage - the family's exit from a deep emotional crisis, the beginning of social and psychological adaptation - parents are already able to adequately assess the situation, be guided by the child's interests, establish working contacts with specialists and follow recommendations.

So, we could use the parable as means of establishing contact with parents of children with developmental problems at any stage of a family's psychodynamics (Krotenko, Naydonova, 2022). It could be used as a diagnostic tool, as a psychocorrective tool etc. As practice shows, parables are effective in diagnostics for different aspects of parental-child relationships. How parents behave while listening to the parable, what are the details during its discussion, - all this give the psychologist important information about the relationship between parents and child.

The psychologist can use the parables proposed by N. Pezeschkian (2016) in his/her work or can choose a story for a specific situation. In our work with requests regarding the establishment of relations between the spouses, we use the parables "The sight-seers and the elephant", "About the happiness of having two wives", "Dirty nests", "Married life is a flower", etc.

In work with parent's requests about particular problem in child-parental relationships we also propose some parables, which can become a starting point for discussing this problem. For example, parable "Two Little Boys" (Krotenko, Naydonova, 2022, p. 112). It is intended to help parents of children with impaired development to realize the need of a judgment-free acceptance of their child, as well as the important role of parental attitudes and expectations, in the child's personality formation, his or her self-esteem and beliefs.

"The teacher was sitting on the seashore, resting after a long excursion. He was gazing at the open, watching two six-year-old boys playing together. They were running, laughing, and then, having become tired, they sat down together close to him and began talking:

- Who do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be a neurosurgeon.
- I don't know. I have never thought about it. You know, I'm not very smart ...

The wind blew their conversation away. And the teacher was thinking about where the second boy had found such certainty in his own limited opportunities. From a teacher? From parents? He is six years old, and if he won't change his thoughts or if someone else won't help him change his opinion, it will have a negative impact on his life, limiting confidence in his own opportunities and potential ..."

Questions for discussion:

- Close your eyes. Imagine your child and your communication with him or her. What are the words, phrases that you most often use, when talking to a child?
- How does your child react to praise and comments?

Another example of the use of parables in counselling parents of children with abnormal development is the Parable of understanding (Krotenko, Naydonova, 2022, p. 111-112). Its aim is awareness of the need to establish closer relations with children.

"Once upon a time young people came to the wise man from a remote village.

-Sage, we heard that you give everyone wise advice, show them the right way, reveal the truth. Please, help us as well! The older generation in our village has stopped understanding us, but it is very difficult for us to live with it. What should we do?

The sage looked at them and asked:

- And what language are you speaking?

- All the younger generation speak Tarabar.
- And the older inhabitants?

The young people thought and admitted:

- We did not ask them.
- That is why you could only listen to them, but not understand!"

Questions for discussion:

- How can you describe your communication with a child? Imagine some image that characterizes your communication. Remember and describe a typical situation of your communication with a child.
- What helps you in communication? What stands in its way?

Conclusions

Parables can perform different functions as an effective tool in a psychologist's work with parents of children with abnormal development: developing a relationship; gathering information; accessing and utilizing resources; suggesting ideas; reframing; facilitating new patterns of thoughts, feelings and behavior. There are two groups of tasks of psychological work with parents of children with abnormal development, the accomplishment of which can be achieved with the help of various options for using parables: the first is the creation of psychological conditions for adequate understanding of the child's problems and psychological readiness for long-term work with these problems; the second - creating a normal climate in the family. Depending on the psychodynamic stage of the family at the time of contacting the psychologist, parables can be used on each of them to work with specific requests of the parents of children with abnormal development and/or behaviour. So, the competent use of parables in the psychological work with the parents of children with developmental problems could take place from the establishment of the contact until the decision making and its review.

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