

Adoptions Pilot Project

The Reciprocal Adoption The Ethics of Memory in Existential Dialogue

Pilot Project for International Adoptions (CEPAF-BS)

GROUPS SESSIONS ORGANIZATION

I come from an experience of ten years in International Adoptions context, working as a Counsellor in self-help groups of 4/5 families each (CEPAF-Bs).

My PILOT PROJECT is structured in two intertwined, parallel /separated operating settings:

- 1) Families Groups,
- 2) Children's Lab,
- 3) Operators Cross-check Supervision, targeted to a progressive, updating, complete vision of the families 'actual problems.

SESSIONS

- 1) GROUP BASED: The Self-Help Group is Facilitator, Self-Regulator and Supporter in the Counseling sharing process
- 2) Regular meetings: The Groups regularly gather every 3 weeks, parents and children coming together to build a progressive, constant family feeling of care/being cared/supported.

TEAM WORK (Multiskills Operators)

A) Sessions in Families'room with:

- 1) Counsellor
- 2) Parent testimonial-Expert
- 3) Secretary
- 3) Stagist

B) Sessions in Childrens 'Lab: with:

- 1) Children care operator
- 2) Stagist

ADDED OPERATORS

Psychologue in Supervision and Training Meetings with the Operators Team, once a month:
Psychoanalyst-Psychiatrist (evolutive age) and Lawyer: support only when needed.

PROJECT-FOCUS on : Adoptive Parents-Children CONFLICT: the Circle

1) The children's double trauma

regards both the original family abandonment and the ethnic group/land/culture uprooting: the loss of their roots and identity, that would have constituted the ground for a balanced psycho-affective growth. The most commonly widespread problem to face with them is their "natural" psychological removal. Under the weight of mental suffering they activate the psychological unconscious defence of waiting for their natural parents, preferring to feel guilty for a "deserved abandon", rather than thinking of not being loved. Consequently they live a conflict between the need to be loved by the

Adoptions Pilot Project

adoptive family and at the same time the rejection of this “guilty love”, that would definitively sanction their abandonment by the biological family. This conflict doesn't allow them to innerly accept their adoptive state.

2) The Adoptive Parents' polarization:

An adoptive family's very usual, “protective” reaction is to re-start the filial relationship from scratch, unconsciously substituting themselves as the couple of “good parents” to the biological “bad ones”. Putting aside the child's “black past”, to the point of erasing” the biological family through the “happier substitution”, means denying the child's belonging to their origins. This creates a void, a “black hole” in the children's psyche, that will re-emerge in the critical age of adolescence, where the natural conflicts of growth, past repressed anger and guilt feelings for having “betrayed” the biological family, will converge.

Parents on the other hand, when unable to accept and process “the diversity” of the adopted child, can find themselves in a situation of psychological rejection of the child as “foreign body”, generating a double feeling of guilt and shame. In this way the initial idealized “act of love” is transformed into a failing human one, able to produce also psychopathological effects, from distress to deviance, or even delinquent outcomes on the filial side and a family's humiliating process through psychiatric institutes and juvenile courts. The epilogue is a sense of desperation and failure for not having been adequate to the choice made.

The basic question is: HOW can the toxic relational circle be broken, passing from the sequence of reciprocal negative reinforcements to the restitution of a family balanced relationship ?

The COUNSELLING METHOD is person-centered and referable to psycho-pedagogical Existential-Humanistic basic-lines and references to C.Rogers/F.Dolto/M.Klein/U.Galimberti.

Considering that there's no method possible to be applied but only an on-going WAY to be shared and lived,

The COUNSELLING AIM is: the reciprocal aware adoption, as a responsible existential choice by both parts, targeted to build a stable relationship through an unstable balance. We are not ready-made parents in fact, but “becoming parents” through a process of continuous education and commitment.

The CUNSELLING WORK crosses the polarised images of the three Inner Maps:

- 1) With Parents: shifting from “ a fixed CLOSED FAMILY” pattern to an OPEN one (recognising the natural family (limits/context/possibilities)
- 2) With Children: shifting from the two families CONFLICT pattern to a DOUBLE family reconciled image of double belonging (mother of belly/mother of heart)
- 3) With the Relationship: Parents-children : Respect - Appreciation - Dignity -Education through the life style examples.

TOOLS:

- * Maieutic ART : the open, imparative, dia-logical process, exploring and deepening through focused questions and compassionate sharing, generating new life meanings.
- * Phenomenological-Existential Approach: narrative, empathic, active listening, imaging
- * The Reversal of the Time Arrow: the Time of Care HERE and NOW

Adoptions Pilot Project

- * The Therapeutic KEYStone: the Positive Regard Change through the “Chain of Mirrors.”
- * Children Care through imaging and creativity practices, aimed to the restitution of the child’s whole image.

CONCLUSIONS

Adoption is a bi-univocal affective and educational relationship in which the recognition of diversity and respect, appreciation and dignity, is fundamental on both sides, where the parents’ filial desire to adopt that child in his/her uniqueness and to be adopted by him/her, needs to meet their child’s desire to adopt them and be adopted by them, as parents, in a common, shared journey. In this way adoption becomes a responsible “existential choice” bearing an underlying ethic of values, aiming to build stable relationships. Adoption is a growth transformative process for both parties, according to a permanent self-education.