



Nino Buadze "Psychology of Raising a Child"

The book covers the main aspects of child development. Psychoeducation significantly helps parents and children to understand their own needs, behavior and attitudes. As a result, a person plans and, if necessary, even changes his decisions or behaviors.

Adaptation of the child to the bio-psycho-social environment and its support is the main challenge of the parent. The development of an individual into a strong, emotionally stable and socially functional person is largely dependent on the essential years we call childhood.

Parenthood is an opportunity to get to know oneself in a new way in the child's world, to realize, experience, develop and in this process to develop oneself.

Family as a unity

A family is a unity of married people, who have certain responsibilities towards one another. It is noteworthy, that family members go through various crises which they either overcome structurally or destructively. After challenges, a family as a system strives to regain homeostasis (balance) and tries to overcome the stresses with minimal losses. Based on the stages of development, we find functional and dysfunctional families. A functional family is where one member takes a responsibility for the other member, provides a peaceful and positive environment, considers other members' individual needs, and is supportive of them. The family members must know what kind of relations and emotions they have towards one another and to what extent they accept, share, and respect each other. Based on this type of understanding, family members develop psychological immunity, which increases the sense of independence and helps them overcome crises.

A functional family is harmonic to the societal norms and is focused on and aimed at maintaining inner order. This type of family knows that it represents a sort of micro-organism – a model of a big world, to which the family belongs to. Based on the qualities we listed above, the functional family has stronger power to cope with crises that will arise during its lifetime. These families are perceived by society as strong and solid.

Homeostasis

Homeostasis corresponds to a state of balance. The speed of the recovery from the crisis depends on the psychological maturity and previous experiences and support network of the family members.

An example of a natural crisis is the entry of a new member into a family. It can be a spouse, the birth of a child, an elderly person moving in, or something else. Adapting to a new person takes time, willpower, and managing emotions. During this period, the family faces new issues, and new challenges, the balance is disturbed, and mobilization of resources becomes necessary. To restore and maintain homeostasis, family members try to distribute responsibilities, which is impossible without an exchange of emotions, support, and care. Otherwise, conflict is inevitable. The crises reveal how strong the psychological condition of the family members is and how well they know each other. The actions of the family members define how the crises are overcome, constructively or destructively.

Stages of development

There are several development stages in a couple's life. Successful overcoming of the crisis depends on the psychological immunity of the family members. During this stage of a relationship, a couple tries to study each other, they have a smaller number of commitments and responsibilities which strongly unfolds at the next stage of the relationship. That is why, the getting-to-know stage is joyful and romantic, full of trust towards one another, love, dreams, self-confidence, and hopes.

A newly married couple continues to get acquainted and study each other in the second stage after the marriage before the child is born. The couple starts to divide responsibilities, care for, and support each other. New boundaries are established, and the family separates itself from the relatives and friends to some extent.

It is crucial, that a family as a separate functional element independently goes through the development stages, takes on financial responsibility, is psychologically mature, and makes independent decisions.

First child – when a new family member is born, the wife and husband adopt new roles, they become parents, a mother, and a father. The family rhythm disrupts, new challenges and responsibilities arise, the needs of wife and husband decrease, and the needs of a child become dominant. In this process, the family members divide responsibilities and share or resist the experiences of their parents. The intensity of irritation and emotions is defined by the degree of satisfaction of primary needs, the child's health, support network, and readiness for parenthood. At this stage of the crisis, mutual understanding and support of the couple acquire fundamental importance.

In which case will a couple cope with mutual challenges? Only, by understanding that all difficulties are shared, hence, they need to divide the responsibilities evenly, be equally involved in raising a child and not forget each other.

This stage of family development is often characterized by the estrangement between the couple, most of the mothers' time and attention is directed to their child, which often becomes the reason for the husband's jealousy - the person who previously felt as the main person now feels secondary, the question arises: is my wife's attitude temporary or permanent? Additionally, when he is assigned to take on certain responsibilities (for example being up all night because of the child, leaving a child with him, etc) he fears that by fulfilling these responsibilities, he might be risking his work and career. A couple can easily cope with this challenge if they divide their time and functions fairly, share their emotions, manage them, and support each other.

Socialization

The first big social environment for a child is kindergarten. New needs are shaped in the couple's life. Who should take a child to the kindergarten and who should bring the child home?

It is difficult for the couple to adjust to the kindergarten adaptation process. As a rule, at this stage, the mother already tries to find a new job or go back to the old one. If the adaptation process of a child continues to be taught, the tension between the couple increases, and family members are not able to adhere to their plans. If the wife and husband are not able to fairly distribute their functions and more responsibility is assigned to one of them, the risk of conflict increases.

A child at school – is a new stage for the family. As in the case of a kindergarten, it is very important that the responsibilities between the wife and the husband are distributed equally and promptly: who will be responsible to take the child to school? Who will be responsible to support the learning process? Who will be more actively involved in extracurricular activities, etc? Hence, the family members face new responsibilities which they need to cope with for their and their child's interests.

The frequently asked question is: when should a parent start working, or should he/she start working at all? Part of society thinks that after the child is born, the parent's career (often the mother's career) is at stake.

Why should a parent work and why should he/she be socially functional? Of course, this depends on the person, part of some parents think that they are fulfilled, recognized, happy and comfortable in the kitchen, which is completely fine. The functional status of the parent is important in many ways. Consciously or unconsciously, if the mother is only engaged in raising the child, she controls the child's life, gets involved in activities instead of a child, studies, makes decisions, expresses the views and demands of the child herself. The parent tries to justify his/her behavior with the motive of care, or with the fact that the child is still small, and the parent knows better what is good for them, but, in reality, this excessive care hinders the child's development.

Sense of fulfillment through child damages not only the parent but negatively affects the child itself. Instead of a functional, strong, thinking, adequate, independent, and self-confident teenager, a teenager becomes dependent, weak, and unaccomplished.

He/she cannot take a step without the parent, is shy, and cannot take independent decisions. When a parent is functional, his/her level of satisfaction is high, has diverse interests, and is fulfilled and happy. In this case, the parent's intervention with the child's life is less, giving the child an opportunity to make independent decisions and learn from his/her own mistakes. The parent becomes the example and source of motivation, knows the importance of boundaries, and acknowledges and supports the child's wishes. The so-called golden middle in relationships is truly a golden key to maintaining balance and healthy relationships for both, parent, and child. The feeling of joy stands on the balance and equal distribution of energy when a person is happy to go out and come home because he/she is functional in both, macro and micro worlds.

Humans are social creatures, we need to be part of the whole, to be seen and recognized. If a person cannot meet these needs, he/she tries to make up for this deficiency by investing in the child, and while fearing criticism, adopting the role of a victim, and justifying himself/herself:

«If I work, who will take them to school? Who will teach them? Who will talk to the teacher? How will they get home? Who will feed them? How will they know what is their assignment? Who will take them to dance classes? » Because of this excessive "effort", the child who was called weak by their parents seems helpless. There is always a time for the parent to share the child's success and failure, to motivate the child to cope with challenges independently. If necessary, family members should divide the responsibilities, and the parents should try to achieve their dreams for themselves even later in life.

Work does not mean that you should choose between your career and your child's welfare. On the contrary, the functional parent is an example of a child. When a child sees that the parent is oriented toward personal growth, and is active and functional, the child mimics the parent as the parent gains authority.

Age crisis – we already spoke about the puberty period in detail. At this stage, person's

moral and social features are expressed, a teenager plans the future, but lacks the full understanding of possible obstacles and challenges. Parent often tries (sometimes very radically) to protect the child from perceivable threats, while the latter is driven toward the adventures with great curiosity.

Adult in the family – Adapting to a grown-up son/daughter in a family is one of the difficult stages for the family. After getting married, the emotional 'divorce' with parents is crucial. Living apart does not mean independence. Despite financial stability, the son/daughter might still experience a high emotional bond with parents and be dependent on their views and emotions.

Adulthood is not just the physical age, it constitutes a psychological maturity of a person who can differentiate between "I want" and "I must" and precisely outline his/her needs. The maturity of a person is defined by their productivity, level of independence, emotional intellect, on their skill to overcome challenges.

Why is this so important? The parent considers the child as a part of their body, as a continuation of their life, parent puts huge life energy and expectations into a child. The child is the essence of their life, the main source of peace and happiness, and the realization of their unfulfilled dreams. We should always remember that our sons/daughters might come to us for advice, and we should share our experiences, but they should not be completely dependent on us. Emotional 'divorce' is less painful if the parent was not interfering with their child's life and allowed them to act independently.

If 'holding hands' continues, the son might go on a vacation with his wife and mother, because he simply misses his parent. This action feeds on the sense of guilt and fear of danger, as well as the mother's attitude 'I dedicated all my life to you, I gave up everything, you ought to listen to me, share your life with me, take care of me.'... With such an attitude mother places her son under the 'tyranny of responsibilities', suffocating him and taking away his right to independent living.

In this case, the risk increases that the parent will interfere in the newly created family life.

Each family establishes its value system, and nobody has a right to intervene in it. When you try to impose your values upon others, or the other way around, conflict is inevitable.

During harmonic development son/daughter marriage and 'emotional divorce' is painless. Certainly, parent shares and supports the newly created family, but this looks like a guest visit – sometimes your door is open, sometimes not. When the son/daughter leaves the family the family returns to its primary position when it was created. The family members start to get to know each other anew, they stay alone, certain responsibilities decrease, and they have more time for themselves and each other. However, the crisis

might not develop constructively. Urging revenge, the wife and husband might express all the accumulated aggression of the previous conflict which they couldn't do before as they were occupied with kids.

Grown-up children even smile when they see how their parents quarrel as young lovers. In reality, the couple returns to their primary situation, when they were newly married carefully choosing words, were jealous of one another and weighed words.

Elderly parent – when a parent reaches the so-called pension age taking care of one's health becomes a priority. This stage unfolds differently in each family, especially, when the couple chooses to live separately, or the other spouse comes into the scene, or there is a big difference between the children's ages, one child is already an adult and the other one is still young. Hence, different types of crises might develop in different couples. Coping with the crisis will depend on the couples' preparedness, provision of support, level of trust, and most importantly, the desire to overcome difficult situations constructively.

Conflict in a family

Conflicts are part of our life. Adapting to life means overcoming stress. Individual characteristics of a person, such as, temperament, psychological type, experience, opportunity, support system, emotional background, needs, and other factors, defines how a person can overcome the conflict, constructively or destructively.

No one can live without conflicts, as conflict means resisting someone and a person can't have equal acceptance towards everyone. Certainly, the development of a conflict, its expression, and its coping strategy are different in each family. There are families with fewer conflicts, members of which know each other very well, they have harmonic relationships as if they understand each other without extra words, they know exactly what to say, in which manner or they know when they need to reserve from expressing their position. We call this emotional intellect, very well defined by the following aphorism: 'sometimes speech is better than silence, sometimes by speaking we spoil (things)'. Emotional intellect allows us to define the desires of our ego, what to say and to whom to say it, as well as what emotions it might trigger.

The reason for conflict can be one seemingly insignificant unresolved situation. But from the subjective perspective, it can be alarming but the couple might not even remember, where it all started. What is the solution? Honest conversation, acceptance that there is a problem, emotional support, and forgiveness.

Both parties ought to want conflict resolution and equally invest in this. The conflict harms not only the participants, but people around them, especially children, who suffer from the tense relationship between the parents the most.

The relationship between parents is a kind of a model for a child which he/she easily absorbs and adapts to his/her life. For this reason, a child might be a victim of bullying or himself/herself become a bully. He/she might think that he/she should overcome difficulties the way they were taught at home - with physical or verbal aggression.

A child often becomes a victim of family conflicts when he/she resembles one of the parents. For example, a mother, who is unable to constructively resolve the issue with her husband, might direct her aggression toward her child, because the child looks like his/her father. After the 'revenge'

parent experiences inner satisfaction, thinking she won the conflict. In reality, this is a completely subjective attitude that in the end damages the relationship between the child and the parent.

Manipulation with child

In times of conflict, manipulation with a child is common, for example, a child excessively emboldened by care, turned into a weapon. A child is in a very difficult position when he/she is offered to choose between a mother and a father. In fact, the child loves them both, while the parent wants to take revenge on the other parent by taking away the child. Parents can try to win the child by threatening or through bribery. As a result of the latter, the child may resort to manipulative behavior, because he/she knows exactly what information is expected of them to provide. Consequently, sometimes it is not the parent who manages the child, but the child manages the adult.

Often parents manipulate children by threatening them. For example, the father tells his son/daughter: 'tell your mother, to get back with me or otherwise, you will never see me again', or 'I will marry another wife and you will no longer have a father. Threatening a child or forcing them to make a choice is a traumatic experience for them.

The child feels guilty and helpless and thinks that parents don't love them and will disappear. . Certainly, all these things tremendously affect the quality of life of a child.

The longer the family conflict lasts the harder it is to cope for a child. The child is helpless and doesn't have the strength to cope with the difficulties. In adulthood, we often observe tendencies of suicide, running away, or destructive actions. As a result, the parents take away the most valuable thing from a child – its childhood years, which shall become the foundation of a child's personality. Conflict narrows the perspective. The conflict becomes the most important thing and everything else loses its significance (even things that were important before): health, children, work, friends, love...

Consciously or unconsciously, conflict results in us damaging not only ourselves but our loved ones. Another common approach to conflict is generalizing a mistake. One or more experiences of failure are not enough to generalize it. For example, if a person thinks that he/she was a victim of a spouse, he/she concludes that: 'all men/women are the same.

Therefore, they raise their child with a similar attitude, harming their value system at the same time.

To conclude: As a result of a conflict the distorted perception of reality and its subjective assessment is very high and the level increases as the conflict continues.

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In the best case, some people look at conflicts as a new challenge, that helps them to grow and discover new opportunities. Conflict may range from chaos to inaction. Most importantly, the way the conflict is solved, constructively or destructively, is based on the experience that individual gains from childhood.