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Work with negligent fathers through psycho-catalysis techniques

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Initiation

Becoming a father is similar to dedication – it requires room for initiation. This has to do with the manifestation of a man's novel capacity as the person able to assume responsibility not only for himself or himself and his beloved woman, but also for another living creature. From the state of assuming the relay race from previous generations, he has to turn into the man passing the baton further. He will have to render the sense of safety to the child and the mother, communicate life experience, teach his child the laws of this world. Successful man-father transformation guarantees him a new feeling of self-significance, self-maturity and complete self-fulfillment.

At which moment does a man become a father? Probably, there is no such moment. This presupposes a whole chain of alterations, which, on one hand, is linked to the disclosure of instincts embedded in human nature and, on the other hand, suggests accepting the challenge of life, coming from outside. All that implies acceptance of responsibility and merging of outbound and inbound processes.

Method

The author's method of intuitively-comprehended, *naive* psychotherapy suggests the research of the processes taking place in human psyche on the level of primary sensations. Essential in this method is human ability to describe one's bodily-spatial senses associated with various mental processes.

An example to such senses can be the image of carnival characters, visibly demonstrating human feelings when the eyes are closed. A man who previously suffered from adultery experience has an enormous knife stabbed in his back (Image 1); a woman living with a demanding mother-in-law carries a shaggy witch on her shoulders (Image 2).

The author's developed somatopsychotherapy researches the configuration of senses corresponding to different conditions, as well as possibilities for their transformation. Psycho-catalysis of bodily senses is another name for the above method.

Configuration of senses

Regarding the acceptance of a new situation, new labor, new task, particularly linked to fatherhood, it is possible to detach two polar images: an infant held in hands and a cross placed on one's back. In one case the situation is accepted from the front; the contact creates the light warming both of them. In another case, a man feels subjected to pressure; he is dark and so is his load.

Emotionally-energetic conditions of the two are absolutely different. In one case, the situation is accepted as a joy, and in another – as a burden or punishment.



In one case it is possible to anticipate the desire to prolong the instant of the

contact, and in another – to get rid of the burden as soon as possible.

In my opinion, this has direct relation to the topic of the Congress. It is possible to define two polar versions of fatherhood: in one situation, the birth of a baby is perceived by the man as a long-awaited event, and in another – as an unpleasant detail in his biography, disturbing his selfish ambitions. Possibly, the men of such stance were inventors of the word designating children: *rug-rats*.

This particularly concerns cases with the men who develop the habit of "living for own pleasure" before marriage or child birth. Such men are used to spending leisure with friends, going hunting, spending hours in gambling parlors hoping to hear the jingle of spattering coins and see the festive twinkle of lights; they are used to using alcohol and drugs, etc.

The question is, whether it is possible to assist the formation of a more mature pattern of human attitude towards child birth and the consequent change of lifestyle?

I would like to describe one of psycho-catalysis techniques, which I frequently apply to work with negligent fathers and husbands.

It is called the technique of transformation of responsibility into corporality.

The technique of transformation of responsibility into corporality

How do people perceive the responsibilities they take as imposed and inconsistent with their immediate and customary interests? How do they perceive life requirements they are forced to react to by virtue of the pressure created by these requirements?

The observations show that people feel such pressure with their back and shoulders as *load*. This can be something ephemeral as a cloud or something as particular as a stone or cast-iron plate. Everything depends on how much pressure they feel from the circumstances. The most conventional image of these senses is a heavy backpack or a sack on one's shoulders.

The psycho-catalysis technique suggests guiding the patient through the following stages:

1. awareness of the existing configuration of senses
2. comprehension of this spontaneously-developed condition
3. making mature decisions about the existing pattern

4. transformation of the pattern
5. modeling of new behavior

Initial configuration of senses is the slave laborer forced to carry load on his back and discard the fulfillment of customary desires. The image of habitual occupations bringing pleasure stands close and the image of the child and the wife stands in the distance.

Comprehension suggests clarification of the following issues: Does the patient intend to drop the load and avoid responsibility? Is he going to simulate responsibility without complete acceptance of it? Or is he ready to accept the responsibility and admit childcare as a part of his life?

Normally, the patient concludes that, even if childcare and fatherhood contradict his immediate, customary and earlier-developed interests, generally they still correspond to his life ambitions.

Having accepted that fact, the patient observes how his body absorbs the power of the external object on his back. Air, liquid, weight or sand gets absorbed by the body, forming a solid and uniform pattern of senses. The energy of *local* and immediate, as well as global interests finds compromise and merges into one. The man feels more mature and balanced within himself and the world. This new condition will let him perform the fatherhood-connected tasks with greater easiness and naturalness.

More on somatopsychotherapy and psycho-catalysis techniques can be found in the author's book *Objects in Flesh*, as well as in other numerous publications.

Case study

Roman was almost completely exempted by his wife from participation in domestic matters. Such permissiveness let him fall into the habit of attending casino, neglecting communication with the daughter and living for pleasure, while his wife was working in three workplaces and maintaining the household.

The patient's constitution revealed certain boyishness: At 33, he did not look like a respectable husband. Free clothing style, stories about his favorite hobbies... The

consultation was attended only because his wife threatened with divorce.

The child was very distant in his consciousness (The man was questioned with his eyes closed). Much closer were the slot-machines with their "Christmas lights" and the jingle of coins. Roman magically believed that slot-machines would return all he had invested, that he would "take out" his money. And thus he kept undertaking ever new attempts to get round the slot-machine.

We discussed his life situation. Does he feel responsible for his daughter's destiny, for the family in general? For him, this was something ephemeral and rather unpleasant, impending over him.

I talked to Roman's wife, Irina – a psychologist by profession who was trying to "understand" the husband. As a result, she started doing everything in his place. I encouraged her to change tactics and start requiring Roman's involvement in domestic matters and the child's life. Roman would either accept the task thus making family life more consonant or would have to leave the intolerable territory, escape from it. The latter would be worse compared to the former; however, better than the family situation. The second option, at least, would release the woman from additional concerns and open the perspective of developing a new relationship with the man more capable of responding to the challenges of reality.

I returned to work with Roman. After a brief discussion, he admitted that the preservation of marriage was in his own interest and that as a man, he was able and had to assume responsibility for what was happening in the family. And his desire for entertainment had to, apparently, find other forms of implementation. With his body, he absorbed what was supposed to enter him and what he had been trying to escape from and "dodge". It dissolved and filled up his body.

He felt more mature and grave.

I asked him where he sensed his wife and the child. They were close by his heart. What about the slot-machines? They disappeared from the skyline of his life. Now he was planning to spend a weekend together with his wife and daughter.

Images: Guido Reni, Pavel Filonov

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