

The right of a child to be loved vs invisible harm-
The occurrence of emotional neglect.

There is a treasure,
wealth in unloved children's hearts.
Under the pressure of silence and indifference,
The treasure remains hidden.
Release this treasure!

Michel Rivard
Quebec

Family is the basic environment of child's life, this is the place, where a child begins the adventure with life, reveals itself. When a child appears in a family, the adventure which is called life starts. During first few years of this adventure we sow grains- abilities, skills, possibilities of child's character- which can give an effect in adult life. What crop would it be is a great mystery, it depends on family reaction to the child's birth, was it accompanied by joy, anxiety, shame or anger, and how those first, the most important companions took care of the child. We can ask ourselves a question: what if the family environment does not provide appropriate conditions for child's educational, emotional, health and social development. We can say that in polish, european and international structures there are some legal regulations which take up the issue of child neglect and supporting institutions executing proper fulfilment of parental care. In Poland the most important legal acts guarding protection of the children is The Constitution, Convention of Child's Rights and Act of the Child's Rights Spokesman. In polish relation between a parent and a child is defined as "parental control", connotation of the word "control" indicates subordination of one person. When it comes to the parent-child relation, the child is in the power of the parent, so the parent has the decisive power. Holding the power over another man, in this particular case over a child, who is not able to exist without the care of an adult person can lead to abuse and neglect. According to my experience in working at school and supporting institutions (Addiction Treatment Clinic, Environmental Common room, Welfare Centre) despite developed legal and caring system, numerous actions taken in order to prevent family violence, the occurrence of neglect is still present. Child's right to be protected from violence, exploitation, neglect and humiliating behavior is still unsatisfactorily obeyed. Neglect contrary to physical violence or abuse is

often ignored in literature, and by supporting institutions (such as Police and Welfare) and health service institution. According to scientific analysis neglecting a child or sexual abuse may influence development of a child, and it affects adult life, for instance comparable level of depression among groups of people, who had experienced neglect and abuse (Bifulco and Morano 1998). It is also believed that experiencing neglect is a potential factor influencing lack of ability to cope with destructive behavior despite participation in an intensive therapy. Barnett and his colleagues described two kind of neglect- physical (lack of satisfying needs connected with hygiene, nourishment, medical care and insufficient childcare causing threat to a child) and psychosocial. It is possible to name different forms of psychosocial neglect: emotional neglect (lack of emotional response to emotional state of a child), cognitive (a child is not provided with opportunity to gain education and cognitive development), social (lack of support for social and interpersonal development of a child). According to Egeland and Erickson (Egeland 1997, Egeland and Erickson 1996) psychical inaccessibility of a parent is the reason for child emotional neglect.

Police statistics show that in 2013 19254 children were victims of family violence. The basis of the statistics is the number of revealed cases of family violence, mainly physical violence. The actual number of hurt children is unknown. In addition in Poland 30% of children live on the edge of poverty, a lot of those children are malnourished, they grow up in families where alcohol, hostility and violence are common things. However physical neglect is just a small part of problem I cope with in my professional career. As a school psychologist I often work with children who are emotionally neglect. Emotional neglect of a child reveals in his or her behavior, functioning among peers, cognitive curiosity, gaining new educational challenges. The occurrence of neglect refers to children who live in poor families, threatened by social pathology, as well as children from so called "good homes", in which parents lay stress on material needs of their children, they omit emotional needs. Situation in which a parent does not pay attention to emotional needs of a child influences sociological and emotional development of the child, what can be easily observed in everyday work with school class. In every class there are some students who are eager of knowledge, show cognitive curiosity, spontaneous creativeness, the ability to deal with difficult situations, and who can socialize with ease. However there are also children, who require special care from the teacher. I work in a small rural school, where children from the age of 6 to 15 attend. The school is situated in Czerniejewo, a small town, located in the central Poland, it is surrounded by forests and beautiful green areas.

In my school psychologist office I often talk to students who have got problems with functioning in a group, what affects their education process. The fine example is a boy, who came to my office because of aggressive behavior (bullying, fights, kicking, swearing) towards his classmates. Tomek, who was ten years old liked playing football, and competing. He was taking active part in a lesson.

But some day, the boy faced problems, which he could not cope with. When he came to me, he was shy, he kept his head down. He was suspicious, and unwilling to participate in games I suggested, he also did not want to answer my questions. Tomek manifested distrust towards a new adult person. He seemed to be a very sad, unhappy child, whose mimics showed no emotion. I had impression that he expects nothing but criticism from an adult person. The crucial element of my work with this boy was creating sense of safety, stability, predictability, understanding in our report. During our work I started creating a diagnose of emotional development of this child. Tomek was not able to name different kinds of emotion, he also could not show mimics, appropriate to the experienced emotion. He was incapable of matching emotion to the situation in which it could have appeared. The correct emotional development of a child is connected with reflecting his or her emotional condition by parents. The boy felt lost in world of emotion, what caused aggressive behavior, since it was the only way for him to deal with weird and unpleasant condition, which he was often experiencing in social situations. This weird and unpleasant condition was anger, which dominated experience of the child. The crucial role of a tutor at the early stage of child's life is to reflect his or her feelings and emotion, next the tutor has to support child's attempts to deal with the tension, excitement, stress, thanks to it the child would learn how to regulate emotions. The boy got frustrated very quickly, and he did not know what to do, how to cope with overwhelming frustration. Next obstacle was unwillingness of the boy to undertake challenges, to explore unknown areas. During our meeting the boy often said "I cannot do it, you do it" before he even try to do it by himself. By these statements the child told me about his unawareness of his competence, about his fear of failure, strong necessity to protect his fragile self-esteem. Feeling of anger and fear was a guard of the fragile self-esteem. Difficulties of the boy are connected with family system, which is dominated by lack of stability, tension and negative emotions expressed towards each other. The boy is the eldest child, he has got three younger siblings. His father works in London, his mother stays at home without stable support. As a mean of upbringing his parents use punishments, also corporal punishments. The boy, who is described by me did not experience extreme emotional neglect, however lack of feeling of

safety, acceptance, liking, as well as lack of reflection of his emotional condition affects negatively his functioning in a school group as well as his feeling of identity and self-esteem. I met Alicja , who was thirteen years old, when it turned out that she stopped attending school. She was playing truant for few weeks, her frequent absences and very poor grades alarmed teachers, who started to pay more attention to behavior of the student. The girl was calm and she rarely spoke. She had just one friend, she usually wore black clothes, she did not want to talk to teachers. When Alicja came to my office she usually crouched on a chair, and kept her head down, she was silent. I accompanied her, I was telling her therapeutic stories. After about a month of “silent” meetings Alicja still did not talk, however she brought her diary with her, and she asked me to read it. I was reading about her difficult experience, unwillingness to live, self-injury, experimentation with illegal substances, relationships with adult men. I could feel that the girl was dreaming about situation in which, she would be able to have a normal talk with her parents. Alicja slowly and faintly opened herself, it was still difficult for her to talk about her experience, but she started to engage herself in therapeutic exercises based on metaphor. The girl improved her school results, but she still had difficulties with socializing. Alicja’s difficulties and suffering were strongly connected with her family situation. Her father was an alcohol abuser. For him, the only way of dealing with difficult situations was the use of verbal and physical aggression. The girl’s mother was indifferent and passive, and absent most of the time. Alicja’s parents did not understand her needs, and they did not know what she was going through. They burdened her with their problems. Proper family bonds, situation in which a parent pays attention to his or her child's needs is the most important factor influencing child's ability to deal with challenges, and some difficult situations, he or she may face. When a child has got an opportunity to tell his or her parent about difficult experience, and the parent would listen to it carefully, it can give sense, meaningfulness , and it support natural healing of the trauma. Alicja had difficulties with talking about her experience, when she had to talk about traumatic experience. This caused situation in which Alicja could release the tension only by self-injuries, truancy, and illegal substances.

How can we prevent emotional neglect of a child? In Poland we have a strong belief that a parent has to be supported in creating emotional bond with the child. It is stated that a child is an individual human being, and since infancy it sees the world in his or her individual way. This belief is called attachment parenting. This terminology was created by an American paediatrician William Sears. Attachment parenting is based on the theory of attachment, a very strong emotional bond between a parent and a child, which influences the whole life of a

man. In attachment parenting recognition and understanding of child's needs is emphasized. It is also very important how a parent respond to the child's needs. In Poland we can observe a crucial change in understanding parent-child relation, this relation is taken into consideration in prenatal stage. Prevention of child neglect is supporting parent's attempts to create bond between him or her and the child. It also means that a parent is prepared for new challenges and needs of a young man, developing awareness of child's experience.

Authors:

Magdalena Zakrzewska - psychologist, psychotherapist, working in schools and institutions helping families, interested in Freinet's pedagogy.

Ilona Dąbrowska – young teacher in polish school, imterested in Freinet's pedagogy, actively looking for new inspirations in her work with children and youngsters.

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