



Orr Shalom: For Children and Youth at Risk

Understanding, interacting and communicating with the disabled child in foster care

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1. Introduction

-> An early strike of faith is like a catastrophic event for life that can not be easily forgotten.



For our work it is important to keep in mind, that the faith of the child, no matter how much to the positive it might develop, stays connected to its this event, to its origin.

2. Foster care and disability

-> Do they harm the child in the same way?



From the point of view of the congenitally disabled child however the main concern is their loosing of the primary relationships, not the disability.

3. Problem areas for all children in foster care

- insecure attachment
- guilt and depression
- trauma

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

High risk: The role of resilience and vulnerability in developing disorders



*When the disabled child gets born **his psyche is not troubled** or malfunctioning. Later, the problem areas for children and adolescents **show great inter-individual differences**, also depending on their personality.*

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

The responsibility of the environment: How to support the unknown?



*We can generally say that children with special challenges are at higher risk to develop psychic disturbances. A major reason for this is the **lack of experience** of social surroundings to treat them adequately.*

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

False assumptions of the professional: distorted
psychic operations

- ➔ *We forget that the child with handicap and disability has the **same potential** to be psychologically healthy as all other children.*
- ➔ *The capacity for **Self-organization** is inside all children and particularly for extremely challenged children an important principal of development we have to build upon.*

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

The role of individuation for resilience and the child's self-organization

- ➔ *The essential need for the challenged and non-challenged child is the acknowledgement and **of their individuality***
- ➔ *Some behaviour we encounter in these children might seem strange or different to us **because we do not understand** the intention behind the behavior*

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

The “professional arrogance”



*... we have come to the conclusion that we do harm to the children with special needs because of our arrogance, ... the **idea that we know more about the child than the child's own inner nature***

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

Self-organization is a process inborn in all children.

- ➔ *Many people in our field become a victim of our **achievement-oriented** society, the child with disability does not grow only from the need of achievement.*
- ➔ *The challenged child needs unconditional support and intense parental caring for creating a good environment: In other words he **needs to be celebrated** for who he is!*

4. Problems for the challenged child in foster care

Making a change: Development is controlled by the inside.



Development is controlled by the inside and only influenced by the outside. This means that the professional has to redefine his role away from “creator of development” to the role of the midwife (Hebamme, mey aledet).



5. Assisting and monitoring the foster child in his new family

The family: learning about handicap and disability

- ➔ *The family needs to be **assured but also challenged** to learn more about the specific disability.*
- ➔ *Do not expect to do everything right; a child with disability, his heart and his behavior, has to be explored and you **need time to become acquainted with the child.***

5. Assisting and monitoring the foster child in his new family

What do we want to assess?

-  The most natural way to assess the state of the child with special needs is to engage in normal spontaneous activity. This helps particularly when the child cannot or does not want to talk.
-  Collect objects and ideas for action; good assessment should be implemented in an every day environment.

5. Assisting and monitoring the foster child in his new family

What do we want to assess? ... using



- *spontaneous play with figures (dolls, puppets)*
- *Interaction with objects or voice (singing)*
- *spontaneous or assisted drawing*
- *Building activities (wood bricks, lego)*
- *Games (Uno, connect four)*
- *cooking / sharing and eating (Popcorn).*

Thank you for your attention