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EDUCATION AND FAMILY COUNSELING: CERTAIN ASPECTS OF CULTIVATING POSITIVE DAILY THINKING IN ADULTS AND CHILDREN FROM PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE

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The article represents a theoretical and applied study that follows the strategic line and doctrinal axis of many works by the author regarding the education and enculturation of the family through the valorization of reflection, the moral action of individuals in the context of counseling focused on the development of positive daily thinking in adults and children. Additionally, here is presented and explained a set of principles, conditions and strategies for family education and counseling, which have been scientifically grounded and correlated with essential orientations from the perspective of social psychology, positive psychology, practical philosophy and complex ontological counseling of the family. Some trends in enhancing the moral climate within the postmodern family are analyzed and methods for building well-being, happiness and improving the quality of family life are specified. In this context, the results of an opinion survey conducted on a structured sample of adults, young family members, and middle-aged individuals (420 subjects aged 25-50) are provided, followed by interpretations, conclusions, and practical recommendations for cultivating positive daily thinking.

Keywords: *education, counseling, family, positive daily thinking, practical philosophy.*

EDUCAȚIA ȘI CONSILIEREA FAMILIEI: UNELE ASPECTE DE CULTIVARE A GÂNDIRII COTIDIENE POZITIVE LA ADULȚI ȘI COPII DIN PERSPECTIVA FILOSOFIEI PRACTICE

Articolul reprezintă un studiu teoretico-aplicativ care urmează linia strategică și axa doctrinală a multor lucrări a autoarei privind educația și enculturația familiei prin valorificarea reflecției, acțiunii morale a persoanei în contextul consilierii axate pe dezvoltarea gândirii cotidiene pozitive la adulți și copii. La fel, sunt expuse și explicate un ansamblu de principii, condiții și strategii de educație și consiliere a familiei, care au fost științific fundamentate și corelate cu câteva orientări esențiale din perspectiva psihologiei sociale, a psihologiei pozitive, filosofiei practice și consilierii ontologice complexe a familiei. Au fost analizate unele tendințe de eficientizare a climatului moral din cadrul familiei postmoderne și s-au precizat modalitățile de edificare a bunăstării, fericirii și sporirii calității vieții familiale. În acest context, am oferit rezultatele unui sondaj de opinii, efectuat pe un eșantion structurat de adulți, familiști tineri și de vârstă medie (420 subiecți de 25 - 50 ani), urmat de interpretări, concluzii și recomandări practice de cultivare a gândirii cotidiene pozitive.

Cuvinte-cheie*: educație, consiliere, familie, gândire cotidiană pozitivă, filosofie practică.*

Introduction

Family education and counseling represent two important dimensions of family pedagogy and of course the general theory of education. In our research and works, the respective approach is a socio-psycho-pedagogical one, since the family is a social institution, and its education and counseling is carried out through a set of complex, multidisciplinary interventions with a psycho-pedagogical and philosophical character. Of course, the philosophical aspect includes clearly defined ontological, existential and axiological implications. Studying that issue for many years, exploring the practical activities of family counseling and substantiating the type of *complex ontological family counseling* (2016; 2018) [3] we observed and accumulated a substantial volume of knowledge, skills and competences, which, sequentially, we will elucidate essentializedly in this study. So, we will expose the main conditions and

strategies of family education and counseling, we will correlate them with some main guidelines from positive psychology, practical philosophy and complex ontological family counseling. We will analyze and explain some tendencies of the members of postmodern family to make the moral climate within it more efficient and we will specify the ways of building well-being, happiness and increasing the quality of family life. In this context, we will provide the results of an opinion survey, carried out on a structured sample of adults, young and middle-aged family members (420 subjects aged 25 - 50).

The essential aspect that I established lies in the fact that we did not observe great differences in the views of familists regarding their attitude towards authentic moral values and the obvious and clearly formulated tendency to learn constantly, to make an effort from both sides: men and women, in creating and maintaining a positive family climate and creating the moral and material well-being of their families. At the same time, we have determined that many difficulties and some family conflicts arise because of some psychological and social *clichés*, which come from social cognition and everyday thinking of adults. These relate to how we think about ourselves, about family members, about other people; how we think about past, present or future actions, etc. At the end of study, we propose some strategies to increase the quality of family life by valorizing the daily positive thinking from the perspective of practical philosophy.

Certain Theoretical Aspects of Family Education and Counseling Focused on Cultivation of Positive Everyday Thinking in Adults and Children from Practical Philosophy Perspective

Specialized literature [3; 4; 6; 8; 9, etc.] elucidates various aspects of family education and counseling. We, are supporters of valorizing this important goal of cultivating its members through the following: non-directive strategies for disseminating knowledge regarding increasing the efficiency of adults in terms of strengthening family cohesion and adaptability, children’s education, optimizing family communication and relationships, etc.; deepening and diversifying the topicality of radio and TV shows; carrying out interesting activities related to the fulfillment of family functions (such as webinars, *round tables*, workshops, practical conferences, etc.); valorizing the thematic posts from the Internet; lectureships, parent meetings in educational institutions; carrying out activities and projects, carried out by *the Directorates for protection of children’s rights*, NGOs, *family, youth, adolescent and children counseling centers* with the involvement of specialists versed in the respective issue. Simultaneously, with the counseling of large groups of adults, the forms of counseling in focus groups are quite effective and welcome, these, being organized according to the common difficulties encountered by adults in their functions as family members and parents, including individual forms of counseling (when the adult address independently to a specialist). It is obvious that *the principles of education and counseling* are focused on the observance of ethical and deontological norms, on a series of rules related to ensuring the accessibility and quality of applied strategies (forms, methods, procedures, techniques). In this context, we consider it appropriate to update, develop and complete some principles, which, in our view, are very important. In developing the principles and strategies, which will be described later, we started from *the analysis of our own family education and counseling experience, our empirical observations; theoretical benchmarks of family education* [2; 3; 4; 8; 10], *the value significance of the person and his/her life* [2; 6], *the instrumental model of moral education from the perspective of practical philosophy* [2], *the perspectives of the development of everyday positive thinking and the essential components of human happiness, approached in the context of positive psychology* [1; 11; 12] *and moral psychology* [6].

Therefore, the formulation and structuring of the principles in question essentially follow the milestones of the above-mentioned route of scientific substantiation:

- ***The principle of balanced exploration of the general dimensions/contents of education (moral, intellectual, technological, aesthetic and psychophysical education) with an emphasis on the practice and internalization of ethical values in the context of positive everyday thinking development,*** compliance with which will ensure the avoidance of educational extremes and will contribute to awareness of the importance of harmonizing all psycho-pedagogical interventions to cultivate the integral personality in the three environments: family, school and community.

- ***The principle of ensuring the functional correlation of the goals, perspectives of education with respect for the unity of pedagogical requirements; initiating, stimulating moral action and strengthening the moral convictions of the learners.*** Centering counseling and education on this principle will contribute to re/thinking, re/structuring, designing, realizing and monitoring the valorization of educational and counseling process of the family, inciting the specialist and parents to certain analyses, prognoses, logical and coherent actions.

- ***The principle of focusing on the optimal combination in education and counseling of complementarity and partnership symmetry; of the male-paternal and female-maternal models,*** the observance of which will ensure the prevention of gender discrimination and segregation.

- ***The principle of valorizing the educational resources, the native potential and the availability of positive thinking of the personality in combination with the practice of essential postulate of practical philosophy, which involves the formation of unity between conscience and moral conduct,*** the observance of which will ensure the effective valorization of parental reflection, awareness and quality enhancement family actions.

- ***The principle of centering education and family life on moral axiology and practice.*** Adherence to this principle will contribute to the promotion of ethical models of adults in the development of positive everyday thinking in the growing generation.

- ***The principle of cultivating a healthy way of life in symmetrical combination with the formation and practice of a dignified/moral way of life and behavior of the person*****,** the observance of which will contribute to the education of a healthy personality from a psychophysical, social and moral point of view.

Of course, the stated principles will work optimally only when they are known, aware and systematically explored by specialists in the field of education and counseling, including by parents (we mean school education and family education). It goes without saying that the principles *entail* the set of strategies, which can be used in family education and counseling, but also in family education, centered on the cultivation of positive everyday thinking. In this sense, it is important to know what ***positive daily thinking*** entails, what its essential aspects are and how to avoid or transform its negative elements in order to increase the quality of personal and family life. Therefore, the emancipation of man continues at a rapid pace, encompassing more and more directions and fields.

Today, ***personal development***, in its varied and multiple forms, is not only an objective of self/ education, but also constitutes a moral value with implications in all dimensions of education (moral, intellectual, technological, aesthetic, psychophysical personal development). In the same way, we can conceive, design and achieve personal development regarding the spiritualization of man; or approach it in the context of valorizing any element of the dimensions of education and the desired *new educations*, such as: *personal development regarding the consumption of free time or the optimal exploration of mass media; or personal development regarding health, family education; for environmental protection*, etc.

Human existence, undeniably a social phenomenon, therefore, also an anthropological, culturological and philosophical one. These four determinatives certainly include everyday life; family life; professional life, etc., which, in turn, are penetrated by a series of influences and actions of a social, psychological, educational, etc. nature. Namely, in this context, we mention the importance of emergence and development of social psychology, positive psychology, sociology of education, counseling and family therapy and other sciences that study man, his/her existence, development and formation in all aspects of life. Thus, the socio-psycho-pedagogical approach announced by us obliges us to specify ***the following key moments***:

- any aspect of human life deserves to be studied from the perspective of ***social cognition***, since until formal/ institutionalized education, each of us internalizes the set of representations and knowledge obtained from everyday life, first of all, from the family and the concrete community;

- human thinking represents a higher cognitive process, which develops gradually (the stages of thinking development/ Piaget J. et al) and of course it mediates human knowledge and metaknowledge, being influenced by several factors: native, environmental, educational. In the given study, we will analyze some elements of social cognition, which contribute to the development of everyday thinking, therefore, we will primarily refer to the environmental factor;

- the development of social psychology, in our view, contributed to: strengthening and deepening the philosophy of education [2; 5], of practical philosophy, focused on moral action, approached in a social and psychopedagogical context [5]; the delimitation of study object, the conceptualization of family therapy and counseling, the specification of research methods and psychological and educational intervention, which contributed to the diversification and argumentation of the effective exploration of eclectic counseling technologies [3; 8];

- this study is not intended to familiarize the reader with the history of emergence of social psychology and detailed research in the field of social cognition (this is impossible to do within the framework of an article). We decided to outline only certain *facets of everyday thinking, which focus on certain distortions of self-knowledge, of the way we think about ourselves and others; how we think about actions in the present, past and how we think about the future* [1, p. 15]. We are interested in these in connection with determining the specificity of family counseling from the perspective of cultivating positive daily thinking in adults and children.

Next, we present the results of survey carried out on a random sample, structured into two age groups of family members/parents (the 1st group, 210 subjects from 25 to 40 years and the 2nd group, 210 subjects after 40 to at 50 years old; the urban environment and the capital's suburbs, being involved the parents of students of three high schools in the municipality of Chisinau, with whom we have been working for several years). The survey had more of a statistical character, aimed at detecting the opinions and attitudes of adults regarding the awareness of family difficulties, which are caused by everyday thinking, that is, by certain negative phenomena of social cognition (such phenomena as: erroneous representations, preconceived opinions, outdated stereotypes, social errors etc.).

In essence, the results/ data obtained, for the most part, did not surprise us, confirming, in fact, our empirical information and observations, accumulated during about 38 years of activity focused on counseling native families. Obviously, the whole sample was able to formulate an adequate answer to the question *of what daily/everyday thinking consists of and what knowledge it gives us*. We determined that the negative phenomena of social cognition upset young subjects the most - 65% compared to 28% of subjects after 40 years, a fact complemented by the explanations of the interviewees, made additionally. The second group, which consists of more mature, wise people with a certain life experience, demonstrated that the investigated subjects are more selective regarding the amalgam of phenomena related to social cognition, and, we would even mention, figuratively, that they possess *a certain immunity* to many of them. The only exception was the phenomenon we call ***the social moral sentence***, which was exposed through the following expressions known to all: *what will people say; shame from neighbors, relatives, friends, etc.; it is not good to be discussed by the public; what do you make me the laughing stock of the world; I don't want to be pointed at; it's not normal to be talked about by everyone*, etc. 74% of young subjects and 83% of mature subjects are worried about this type of assessment. We, to a certain extent, consider this phenomenon as a kind of *social regulator of people's behavior* and we cannot give examples of some negative influences on family relationships, but on the contrary, often, the care of not being so labeled prevents a series of behavioral difficulties, committed both by adult family members and minors, although they sometimes show dissatisfaction.

At the same time, the investigated subjects from both groups (the 1st group – 87% and the subjects from the 2nd group - 76%) perceive the damage and mention the negative impact on the family's well-being of preconceived opinions, such as: *the child must be beaten as long as they are at the bed's side; today's young people are losers, they are naughty, I don't know what's wrong with them; teenagers are unmanageable; it was really good when women knew their place*, etc. These were set forth as examples, even by the subjects under investigation. Of course, postmodern society, which is centered on the study of psychology, on the development and enhancement of personal efficiency, on the idea of individuality, uniqueness, freedom of expression and actions, the initiation of various types of cohabitation, etc., permanently creates a series of judgments, attributions, social opinions (which, with certainty, can be erroneous and false). The given situation requires the involvement of competent specialists in the field of education and family counseling, at the same time, the importance of collaboration with *inter- and multidisciplinary teams*, which presuppose the involvement of specialists from two interconnected fields, such as pedagogy and psychology or the

involvement of specialists from many fields: family counseling, psychotherapy, psychology, psychopedagogy, jurisprudence, social work, pedagogy, sometimes also from medicine.

In the targeted study, we will essentially approach only a few phenomena from everyday thinking, namely, **how we think about ourselves and others; how we think about the actions of the present, the past and how we think about the future**, focusing only on the most frequently encountered aspects that can produce difficulties in communication and family relationships, can create intrapsychic/ inner conflicts and interpersonal conflicts (from our experience working with native families). In this context, we make some clarifications and explanations regarding the essence of everyday thought phenomena, which can negatively influence the family climate.

Social cognition and people's everyday thinking often gives us the opportunity to observe the phenomenon called ***the false consensus effect*** (people tend to perceive and define their own characteristics, opinions, preferences, aspirations, behaviors as relatively common), which reverberates with the phenomenon called ***the false uniqueness effect*** (when people estimate one's personality or behavior as more unique/ special, peculiar, which is shared by a very small number of people). Our observations and research results (65% in young subjects and 74% in more mature subjects) demonstrated that these two phenomena cause discomfort and family conflicts. We frequently collide in our daily thinking with such phenomena as: *social illusions, generalizations and attributions, erroneous findings, excessive/false modesty, judging other people based on the alleged ability to identify/ read the character and mentality of the individual, attributions of success or failure, cognitive rumination* (cognitive process by which the individual develops a series of repetitive thoughts regarding an unpleasant experience [1, p. 314]); *ennobling the past or devaluing the past, present and future, or, conversely, overvaluing them*, etc.

Next, we are going to outline some strategies, harnessed by us, that have proven to be effective in family education and counseling to cultivate positive everyday thinking from the perspective of practical philosophy. In this vein, we reiterate that ***practical philosophy*** valorizes the reflections on social morality, on human conduct and actions, on the acquisition of happiness. ***Practical philosophy*** includes moral philosophy, whose fundamental problem is that of person's purpose in the world [5, p. 127]. ***The practical philosophy*** of the family studies the same problems, but in a family context by conceptualizing, substantiating and identifying *the practices of forming the unity between knowledge, conscience and moral conduct*, in order to realize human nature through the exercise of virtue, concentrated in *the moral Self* [2 , pp. 8-9].

Starting from the aspects exposed above, we propose the following strategies for cultivating positive everyday thinking, as follows:

1. ***The strategy of demonstrating the benefits of emotions, feelings and positive/moral thinking for person and family (for adults and children).*** Within the strategy we will eclectically combine various forms, methods, techniques and procedures. In particular, we will apply: *conversation, circularity, hypothesizing, explanation, narrative therapy, solution-focused therapy, strategic family therapy, comparison, analysis and synthesis/summarizing and modeling positive perspectives of thinking and behaving*, etc. At the same time*, the method of structured exercises* was successfully used, during its practice, each beneficiary (adult and minor) recorded in writing his/her emotions, feelings and unpleasant thoughts, ranking them in the order of their frequency of occurrence, indicating the cause, i.e. the negative phenomenon, arising from the social cognition that provoked them (detected at the level of everyday thought). Then, *the Personal Record of the re/structuring of everyday thinking is drawn up* based on the reflection and establishment of the set of emotions, feelings and positive thoughts, through which the first, the negative ones can be substituted. At the same time, the beneficiary verbalizes his/her actions, objectifying them in moral actions and positive, concrete behavioral strategies.

2. ***The strategy of demonstrating and establishing the value significance of the person and human life***. This strategy will be carried out with the counselor's scaffolding, with the aim of defining three valuable aspects regarding the person's life: ***what he/she is like, what the person represents and what he/she has***, including, ***elaborating his/her psychophysical portrait; his/her intellectual and moral portrait, accompanied by a list of value priorities and a list of achievements in life (personal, family, professional, etc.)***. The given method can also be given to the recipient as homework. At the next meeting, each position

is analyzed and discussed together with the beneficiary, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the personality. Finally, the value perspectives are projected, taking into account the person's aspirations, interests, desires and needs. This is done to demonstrate to the person the value significance of him/her and his/her life.

3. ***The strategy of analysis and awareness of the themes of human existence in connection with the determination of negative phenomena of social cognition, which persist in the everyday thinking of person.*** The strategy involves a review of the beneficiary's existential themes, by concretely answering three important questions: ***what problems does he/she encounter*** (defining the concrete aspect: personal life; family life/as a couple and in the relationship with children, etc.; in the profession, etc. a.); ***who creates these problems*** and ***what the person has accomplished to solve them***. Each aspect is analyzed and discussed, and finally the beneficiary is proposed to develop a plan to solve the problems. Sometimes the counseling is personal, sometimes it is group, that is, it is for the whole family. Obviously we will be able to make concretizations, summarizations, generalizations, completions and modeling to transform negative elements into neutral or positive elements.

4. ***The strategy of practising moral gratitude*** is, in our view, one of the most important, as it is focused on learning two decisive behaviors for achieving personal happiness and family happiness. The first behavior is related to ***the inventory and awareness of successes and achievements*** (personal, family, professional, social, etc.), and the second is related to ***the concrete manifestation of gratitude*** (learning the various forms: *appreciation expressed orally or through various rewards; small gifts, letters of gratitude, invitations to concerts, performances*, etc. Here, everything depends on the creativity and inventiveness of each person, but also on the knowledge of the preferences of those close to him/her (to cause them amazement, pleasure, moral satisfaction, etc.).

5. ***The psychomoral restoration strategy*** aims *to cancel the state of restlessness, anguish, despair, which disturbs the soul balance of the person; restoring self-confidence; instilling the idea that everything is fixable and all obstacles can be overcome (except death); restoration of self-worth, restoration of inner balance and moral restoration* [6, pp. 342-344]. The methods applied in moral therapy can be multiple: conversation/dialogue; circularity, hypothesizing, analysis and reflection; reframing; comparison, summarization, structured exercise, metaphor; narrative therapy; moral, humorous/comic stories; epistolary therapy, play therapy, melotherapy; occupational therapy, involving pets (especially cats and dogs), etc. Often in psychomoral restoration such procedures and techniques are of great use as: examples and stories from the counselor's personal life; psychological montage, suggestion, neurolinguistic programming, etc. Of course, we will strive to bring the person back to the state of well-being that he/ she experienced previously, other times, the counselor's actions, well thought out and carried out combinatorially, will succeed in substantially changing the cognitions, attitudes and behaviors of the beneficiary.

6. ***The strategy of developing and monitoring the positive/ moral perspectives of the person and the family*** is widely applied in *the Synthetic Model of complex ontological counseling of the family* [3, p. 37], which guides the counselor in the direction of the optimal combination of supporting and learning factors, of action and reflection through the analytical-synthetic exploration of the philosophical dimension/ ontological, existential and axiological aspects; of the educational/ psycho-pedagogical dimension and the dimension of practicing systemic moral actions [3, p. 36-37]. The forms of counseling can be individual or group/ collective, and the various methods, taken from all types of therapies: collaborative; strategic; structural; systemic; centered on reflection; narrative; moral etc. The essential moment here resides in the fact that in the end we bring the beneficiary to the awareness of the negative phenomena of social cognition, which influenced his/her daily thinking and which complicated his/her personal and family life, in order to avoid valorizing them in the future. At the same time, in parallel, we propose to elaborate with the beneficiary together, at other times, he/ she will do it independently, *the list of positive/moral perspectives (personal or family)*. The counselor's actions are combined with discussions, explanations, reframing and redefining, etc., the emphasis being immediately placed on his/her reflections and the elaboration-structuring-application of techniques for monitoring the realization of the planned perspectives.

Summarizing what has been exposed, we consider it appropriate to complete the material in question

with the recommendation to deeply study the sources presented in the bibliography (and others) and to be aware of the need to conscientiously, systematically, competently and objectively approach the issue announced in the title of the study, involving as fully and creatively as possible the beneficiary and valuing the theoretical and practical eclecticism of counseling the person and the family. At the same time, we recommend specialists in the field of counseling and family education to harmoniously and appropriately combine the flexibility and suppleness of professional thinking with the originality and quality of applied technologies.

Of course, the study carried out only points to a vision and a type of approach to the problem, this, representing a brief introductory foray into the complex and contradictory aspects of social cognition and everyday thinking, which penetrates and influences the existence/life of each person, of the entire family or even the human community. The ideas presented in this study and in other similar studies incite the author's hope to develop a monographic study devoted to the prevention of personal and family difficulties that arise from erroneous social cognition.

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