

## A PSYCHOLOGICAL - LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO FAIRY TALE

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### **Rezumat**

*În acest articol sunt prezentate esența didactică și psihologică a povestii, cât și funcțiile ei terapeutice în viața unui copil. De asemenea, este bine fundamentată importanța povestii în lupta împotriva consumului de droguri.*

A fairy tale plays a significant role in a child's life. It develops imagination, thinking and literacy. It also helps to form a system of moral values, a basis for communication and behavior. The most important thing in a fairy tale is „that good always triumphs over evil” [5, p. 308]. A child of a preschool age has a very developed mechanism to identify himself or herself with a positive character. This means that by reading books children learn to distinguish good from evil. What is evil nowadays? What is it, which spreads as a malignant tumor affecting not only the body but also the soul of a human being? What is evil that rolls the dice turning people's lives into hell? What is evil challenging mankind at large? Of course, it is drugs...

Prevention of drug consumption, as well as alcohol and tobacco, represents a necessity and a national priority in many countries. Firstly, this is due to the fact that the age of the consumers of narcotic substances is becoming younger and younger. The latest data reflect that 90% of first attempts of drug consumption occur by the age of 16. There are more and more cases of children aged between 10 and 12 years old using psychoactive substances.

The earlier is the debut of drugs consumption the faster is the addiction and the more disastrous are psychological, physiological and social consequences. Under these circumstances, the rehabilitation programs become less efficient. „Those who start using drugs at the age of 25 become on average completely addicted in 10-12 years; 20 year olds in about 5 years; whereas a 15 year-old teenager can become addicted in 5-6 months. Therefore, it is not the chemical nature of the drug that provokes addiction, but the influence of drugs on person's feelings and behavior” (Ralph Schneider, Ingrid Lux, 1999).

That is why the modern approach to this issue prioritizes, chiefly, the prevention activities, which should be applied before “teenage crisis” starts, and the beneficiaries are children aged from 5 to 9. At this age, it is important to assist the child to acquire the correct behavior. It is useless to explain to a 14-16 year-old teenager the consequences of drug consumption, if he completely lacks some of behavioral patterns and moral values. Which is the most accessible language to speak to preschool children about drugs?

Some psychopedagogists think that using the sense of “fear” by threatening with deceases and death can have a beneficial effect. Nevertheless, the users of this method did not take into account that preschool children do not generally value their health and life. Therefore, the information provided by these “prevention experts” often does not match the age, psychological and physiological characteristics of children's development.

Researches show that until the age of 10 children are right-brained, which means that they are creative. That is why, any information necessary for children's development and socialization must be adapted and presented as a fairy tale. Fairy tales, in this case, “have real therapeutic power in children's life; they can influence deeply and positively, because they address a symbolic and accessible language, using images and feelings” [1, p. 47].

Bruno Bettelheim, an expert in children's psychology, focused on individuals with emotional problems, thinks that “in order to enrich the child's life, one should stimulate his/her imagination” [2, p. 21]. They should also help children to develop their intelligence and express their emotions; to be more aware of their fears and aspirations; to take seriously the difficulties they experience, and, at the same time, promote the child's confidence and help him believe in his future. It is important to know that some

fairy tales can help achieve all those things. Another children's psychologist, Doris Brett, thinks that „children tend to identify themselves with the positive character from the fairy tale, trying to copy his/her behavior in the fight against own fears and problems” [4, p. 114]. Furthermore, fairy tales are extremely beneficial for children's psychological development, because they can give hope, confidence and courage. The child, „who lost his hope or confidence, gives up and risks not succeeding at all” [2, p. 59].

There is a great selection of fairy tales, among which there are therapeutic ones. A therapeutic fairy tale uses metaphors and symbols in order to penetrate our filters and conscientious resistance and settle safely in the unconscious, where it will produce its effects. „A Story about Lost Happiness” [3] is a fairy tale that was especially designed for this purpose: to help prevent drug, alcohol and tobacco consumption, to deliver certain behavioral patterns and moral values, to develop problem-solving skills, to help those who listen to make certain decisions.

The well-known American psychotherapist Milton Erickson was among first who used fairy tales as a therapeutic method. Answering the question how he manages to cure by telling fairy tales he said, „People come and listen to me telling them fairy tales and then they leave and change their behavior” [2, p. 68].

The fairy tale therapy can be used by those who do not have a special training in psychology, namely by educators and parents. In order to do this, it is necessary to follow some principles:

- *dosing the information during cognitive process. Initially, it is enough to read the fairy tale, watch the pictures and identify the characters;*
- *afterwards, the fairy tale must be interpreted, thus staged by grown - ups and children;*
- *after interpretation, help the child analyze the characters' behavior and express their attitude regarding the fairy tale;*
- *the content of the fairy tale should match the child's age as well as particularities of his psychological and physiological development;*
- *grown-ups will abstain from commenting the moral (did you see that) because there is a risk of canceling it, and awake, because of our emphasis, exactly those defense and resistance mechanisms, which we try to avoid by telling fairy tales;*
- *to believe in power of fairy tales and children's power to use the message.*

As modern scientific research shows in the fight against such an illness as drug addiction, a highly important place is occupied by preventive measures. It is proved that the earlier a child learns about the harm caused by drugs the sooner he or she will be negatively predisposed towards them. That is the reason why psychologists recommend starting prevent alcohol abuse, tobacco or drugs consumption by reading a fairy tale.

### **Bibliography**

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