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## **Child in a Family temporarily Being Apart**

Emotional bonds in family have a great meaning for proper development and children upbringing. One cannot provide a child with a different emotional development than the normal family relationships where tenderness and interest from the earliest years of living should constitute an established principle both caretakers follow.

First years of children's life are crucial for their psychological development. If the period of early childhood is not accompanied by feelings that are necessary and significant for the offspring, it can unfortunately result in some disorders in psychosomatic development, especially within the socio-emotional sphere.

Emotional bond is irreplaceable. It is noticeable in the case of children who have been deprived of their parental care to different degree (Prokosz, 2010). They often suffer from depression, neurosis, and are subject to the separation anxiety disorder. Other visible symptoms such as low self-esteem, apathy and a broad sense of loneliness are also reported. Hence, for instance, a young man who has been active, suddenly loses aspirations and the life activity seems to decrease.

One of the consequences of disorders within emotional bond is a spiritual orphanhood, which refers not only to childhood, but also to the period of adolescence.

## Loneliness

Loneliness involves a human condition and existence referring to lack of contact with other people and with own self. Hence, a lonely person is deprived of any contact with others (sometimes voluntarily), however it also concerns someone who has no close relative.

Each of us sometimes felt lonely or even rejected in our life and it tackles both adults and children. *Loneliness is a frame of mind characterised by a painful ailment of lack of bonds and permanent contact with a person important for a given child* (Łopatkowa, 1989, p. 45).

Loneliness is a term defined in many different ways. Jan Szczepański (1988, pp. 20–21) claims that *loneliness is a lack of contact with other people and with oneself. It may also constitute an effect of inability to shelter in loneliness of one's inner world, if one has not learnt how to live and act in such world. There are people who can only live in the world of external things or other people's worlds.*

Contemporary men very often live in an unwanted or uncommitted loneliness. Individualism has led to the situation when we are able to see only ourselves, whereas other selves are treated as a potential threat or things to be utilised. *That is why we edge away into the world which seems to be safe. One of the main reasons of loneliness plague is individualism with its all extremes, abilities of self-devotion, temporary love or friendship* (Romanowska-Łakomy, 2003, p. 206).

A man of today is hiding from others because it is a shame to behave like a human. The society stratifies not only into groups of the impoverished or men of wealth, but also into young and old ones. The problem of old age is particularly becoming subject to discrimination. Nowadays, a cult of youth is being widespread and, unfortunately, the elderly are very often unable to meet the demands of the today's modern world. They are treated as

no longer necessary, unable to achieve anything anymore. It does not happen only in relation to older people. Many parents frequently treat in a similar manner their own children that cannot rise to challenges put ahead of them nowadays.

Persons who feel lonely have their abilities for acceptance and effective actions decreased or limited. *Such individuals also experience considerable difficulties in personal, social and occupational functioning* (Gawęcka, 2005, p. 270). It seems that the interpersonal relationships within the family, marriage or friendly terms are the most important. The degree in which interpersonal interactions, taking place in family, protect its members against loneliness depends on factors like the nature of such relations and family interactions in which their members participate, standards of mutual emotional bonds, and the dynamic stages of life cycle of a particular individual. Elements connected with personal feeling of loneliness also include properties of an individual diminishing his/her social value and attractiveness or reducing his/her motivation to initiate various social contacts. An improper process of socialisation, especially during childhood and adolescence, leads to lack of collectivisation and implies loneliness. It may be of more permanent character and it must be stressed that in most of the cases parents are to be blamed for such circumstances.

Without any doubt, loneliness affects the manner, style and quality of life. The heart of the matter and reasons of loneliness are complex and not easily nor explicitly estimated. In general, they involve sociological, psychological and philosophical aspects, i.e. *loneliness of an individual in sociological terms is often defined as physical or social loneliness. It is understood as a situation that is characterised by weakening or lack of natural bonds with other human, living in a very loose relation with the society or even beyond it. Social loneliness may occur within the three following dimensions* (Szczepański, 1988, pp. 20–22):

- *An individual has not raised a new family.*
- *An individual has raised a new family, but with time family relations (family bonds) weakened or faded away and the family breakdown took place.*
- *An individual lives in isolation or is being isolated from the rest of the society.*

In each of those groups a number of categories of lonely individuals can be separated as social loneliness may be of total or partial character. Partial loneliness concerns the group of people who have no natural bonds within (or they are somehow disordered), but still some personal and permanent contacts with other people occur.

On the other hand, the term *total social loneliness* concerns people who experience neither natural relation nor ongoing personal contacts. It is synonymous with *social isolation*, i.e. an absence of other people lack of physical contact (Szczepański, 1988). A prisoner or a hermit can set such example. It seems that also nowadays many people could define their situation as a state of total social loneliness.

The feeling of loneliness have been recently appearing within families which seemingly are full of happiness, care and stress-free life. Well-off families or those aspiring to such a social position, or families that belong to the middle class being overfocused on providing material needs lose mutual relations. Since parents are concentrated on work and professional careers and have no time for their children, they are often forced to employ nannies, babysitters or make their offspring stay at school till late and attend extra-curricular classes. It allows them to feel no remorse creating an illusion of providing children with a proper care. Thus, children spend much more time with some strangers rather than with their own parents that are usually seen early in the morning or late in the evening. In such situation it is hard to create proper and genuine bonds. Moreover, lack of such bonds can-

not be compensated by any relations with nannies, babysitters or teachers. Even the best relationships with peers are not able to compensate such lack because each child strives for parental affection.

Children whose parents consider such unfavorable situation as a passing phase are in a slightly better position, as a compromise for the sake of the family material wealth is reached. Unfortunately, situations when children are perceived as an obstacle on the way to career or just an element unnecessarily absorbing one's valuable time are not scarce. Such children cannot experience their indispensable positive emotions, often functioning as an object of parent's frustration or anger. Hence, parental role is often limited to unpleasant duty.

### **Solitude**

Not much is still known about children's solitude as unfortunately adults attach insufficient importance to children's feeling of loneliness. Quite often they just have no time or willingness to do it, pretending the problem does not exist. *The problem is that adults live in a permanent rush and always urge their children to hurry. We are so much busy that "to have" is more important for us than "to be". In our rat race we lose time mainly for our children. In so much timesaving culture we are feeling more and more devoid of what is precious for us. No matter how much we appreciate the time, we do not spend enough of it together with our families. During the last twenty-five years contacts between parents and their children have unfortunately diminished. We are more effective and better organised what enables to increase a pace of life. If parents "loosen" their schedule a bit, then children will be able to express their feelings such as curiosity, enthusiasm, or delight* (Fields, 1994, pp. 14–15).

Children who should play and have fun are often forced to cope with problems of the adult world. Sometimes those

are the problems even adults cannot manage themselves, so how can we demand from children to be up to the demands instead of playing or enjoying their time? Grandparents very often say that children are not being raised the way they used to be, and they are undoubtedly right. Times have changed and our children are the best sign of that. In the 1920s, parents raised children laying stress on patriotism, obedience, respect for the Church and good manners, whereas nowadays parents reward their children for independence, determination and common sense. Change in the mentality of the society results in different attitude to children and the way they are treated.

Polish 2+1 family model is another symptom of adverse transformations. Due to economic factors Polish couples decide to have smaller number of offspring comparing to several years ago. In radical cases that means possessing just one child. From macro perspective it undoubtedly affects the country's demography and generates anxieties about its economic future. In micro interpretation being brought up without siblings is connected with a greater risk of disorders in educational process and with manifestation of loneliness, especially in a situation when even one child seems to be too absorbing for busy parents, and they are not able to spend enough time on upbringing, or just being with their child.

Additional adverse condition of such family model (Olearczyk, 2007) concerns grandparents who work until advanced age (with regards to the latest legal regulations extending the retirement age). Those are the grandparents who usually help overworked parents in childcare and appease the parents' absence. Unfortunately, extended grandparetns' professional activities unable them to look after their grandchildren, thus children have time arranged by practically strange people or institutions such as school clubs or private language schools.

## Orphanhood

The phenomenon of orphanhood have been present since the beginning of the formation of families and communities. There are different types of orphanhood, such as (Olearczyk, 2007, pp. 108–112) *natural, full and half orphanhood, emotional (spiritual), social, migrational (euroorphanhood), decisive (court decisions), state-of-mind orphanhood, street children and the one resulting from lack of same-sex identification*. The distinction reveals the type of loneliness children are affected by. Still, they do their best to overcome it. However, if they do it without the support of others this state can even worsen and lead to escape from a world that does not allow for a decent existence, or to satisfy their own needs (in terms of both mental and physical health).

Nowadays social and spiritual orphanhood is more and more noticeable. The social orphanhood takes place in situation when a child has become abandoned irrespective of reasons. It involves improper care provided by one or both of parents and mainly origins from some disorders within the family. Due to the lack of appropriate childcare conditions some children are from the very beginning deprived of any chance to be brought up in their own family.

A social orphan refers to a child without a proper care staying at a caretaking facility such as an orphanage (a socialising institution of total care), or a child being under the custody of other foster care form (Andrzejewski, 2007).

Spiritual orphanhood depicts children's loneliness in their own families due to lack of proper care, emotional bonds or spiritual support from biological parents. Children who stay at orphanages feel lonely, abandoned and forgotten by their parents. They often experience a deep sorrow and consider their stay at such places as a punishment. They eager for love and interest. They often wish their caretakers provided them

with even a poor substitute of love, interest and understanding. Children that are raised in a family, but practically experience no of such emotions, are in a similar situation.

### **Euro-orphanhood**

Present-day times are unfortunately marked with social processes that are disadvantageous for functioning of Polish families. Standard and common model of a complete family is more and more often being replaced with permanently or temporarily incomplete models. Labour migration, particularly intensified after Poland's accession to the European Union led to the syndrome of absent-father, i.e. a father who is practically absent from a child's life, for example due to a long-lasting or frequent seasonal work abroad.

Absent-mother syndrome related to progressive feminisation of emigration is even more disadvantageous for a child, and, unfortunately, more frequent. In the face of many social transformations systematically altering traditional division of family roles the opportunities created by the accession served as a serious encouragement for throng of Polish women to seek a chance for an improvement in the family situation, and for more interesting life or self-accomplishment. Thus, a large group of Polish children have lost the contact with a fundamental person crucial for the process of education.

When these two syndromes combined, the most disadvantageous phenomenon occurs as a child is de facto condemned to often long-lasting orphanhood. Such situation is subsequently intensified especially by the result of post-accession emigration. Society at large have become aware of the Euro-orphanhood problem, as the orphanhood results from a long-lasting or temporary emigration of both parents to the countries of European Union. Euro-orphanhood comes across as a serious problem in many regions of Poland. Most of the parents who decide to migrate abroad are men. As national studies (Walczak, 2008)

implemented in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children prove, parental migration lasting more than two weeks, was made up in 2004 by 73% of fathers. National surveys conducted in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, embraced pupils aged 9 to 18. The gender proportion of migration lasting more than 2 months is similar and dominance of fathers is also visible in this regard as their percentage reaches 73%. The migration of parental relationship between parent gender and length of stay abroad is also noticeable, as fathers leave more often and for longer than the mothers. Research shows (Walczak, 2008), that the number of migrating mothers is higher only as far as seasonal work abroad is concerned (48,1%). In other cases (over 2 to 6 months, over 6 to 12 months, or over 12 months) fathers make up the majority in the group of parents of pupils between 9 and 18 years of age, declaring the duration of the absence of one parent in the course of the past three years. Overall, nearly 70% of respondents whose mothers were leaving to work abroad in the past three years found that the total time of separation does not exceed 6 months. Taking into account longlasting migration, it refers more frequently to fathers (14,3%) than mothers (9%). Women rarely decide to work abroad, and if they decide so, the majority concerns short periods of absence from home, i.e. up to 2 months.

Parental absence may occur more unbearable when it concerns a parent having greater importance for the current development of a child's individuality. In this regard, the absence of a father being a male model of individuality, pattern of behaviour and role in family, will definitely occur more severe for boys' development. Similarly, the mother's absence will have a greater influence on girls. Children as persons with insufficient life experiences imitate their parents' behaviour. At the same time, they acquire behaviour of the same sex person much more easier.

### Lonely Children Feelings

Experiences connected with loneliness often differ, ranging from fear and nightmares, through reconciling oneself to one's fate, and affirmation. Negative feelings (especially the moral ones) concerning loneliness result from human nature and may lead to personality disorders. Participation in culture, and culture itself, seem to provide effective protection. Abilities to present socially accepted values, patterns of behaviour and developing creativity enable to reconcile individual optimal inner growth with appropriate interpersonal contacts, as well as with active participation in a group life.

One of the tragic consequences of accumulated feelings of loneliness among children is self-aggression, manifested in many different ways, with the most radical ones leading to their mental or physical self-mutilation. Alike the aggression which is directed outward, it is very often a tool of drawing others' attention, a desperate attempt to mark one's presence, calling for love. In other cases it is a drastic symptom of disorders within educational process, or a trait of very intense mental disorders.

On the other hand, in terms of physical dimension of feeling of loneliness, lack of necessary and direct contacts with parents can sometimes bring about manifestations of syndrome of various disorders in child's psychophysical development. It is referred to as separation anxiety disorder which often reveals apathy, or difficulty in establishing contact with a child. The most characteristic symptoms include tottering, rocking, head shaking or fiddling with some objects such as toys. As far as the origins of the disease are concerned, the period of early years of a child's life is of paramount importance. As it was mentioned, *insufficiency of necessary experiences of sensory nature and emotions in that period lead to various disorders in*

Parents tend to place their children in the nursery earlier than before, sometimes even after a few months after their child's birth. As a result, unfamiliar people accomplish parental obligations. It is taking place at a faster pace and in wider range. Therefore, a lot of disturbances occur within the emotional bonds between children and their parents since the earliest years of the child's life. Moreover, the disturbance and its effect are intensified after the nursery period, as other institutions and other strange people provide care for the children, including kindergartens, community centres, nannies, etc. Nonetheless, time spent with the peers is also beneficial for the child's development, but it should not constitute the only socialising group. It is disadvantageous for the child's growth when the kindergarten or other institution becomes the most important place where the most crucial relations are built and emotional development takes place. In such circumstances the educational process is hindered. People working in such institutions are different and their engagement and abilities differ, not always setting a perfect example. Therefore, such staff may provide a real support and befriend children, but on the other hand they may turn out totally indifferent and insensible to children's needs making them feel even more lonely and abandoned. A child's reaction to the separation with one or both parents can vary, depending on different factors. Mental condition of such a child is apparently different than being orphaned.

We can observe that there is a new term "euro-orphan" that has been used quite often recently. It might be appropriate for headlines in a newspaper but comes across as rather unacceptable in the pedagogical environment. It is imprecise and inappropriate in use towards children and their families, conveying condemning meaning. It cannot be said whether a child, whose mother or father left abroad, is an orphan or not. Some claim explicitly that such a child is not an orphan (Tyszka, 2003). Open European borders and the possibility of unlimited travelling

across the continent have significantly changed our lives. Young people particularly feel as legitimate citizens of Europe. They want to travel around the world, learn about other cultures, search for job and place to live. Poles migrate not only from villages to big cities, but also from Poland to other countries. Hence, family life has been changing recently, for example the number of international marriages has increased, as well as the number of divorces. Today's emigration is the proof of freedom and independence, and not only economic compulsion (Tyszka, 2003).

Apart from young people who have not established families yet, parents of small children leave the country as well. Their life abroad brings about separation from the closest members of the family, especially from their children. The departure of at least one parent implies serious consequences within the family functioning and structure. There are cases when people cannot find a job in a foreign country, they feel lonely and lost in a new and strange place, as their language skills are often not good enough to communicate with the local inhabitants. Sometimes they fall into debts or feel ashamed as they cannot earn enough money, so they do not want to go back home more impoverished than before the departure. Their absence is prolonged month by month, hence the contact with their families is dim. There are more and more conflict situations occurring. At times the bond is totally broken. All psychological functions of the child are developed within social context and the first relationship between a child and their parents have an enormous impact on the child's later life (Plopa, 2011).

Through relations with other members of a family a child meets the outer world, learns what is important, what is worth attention, how to communicate, etc. Through relations with parents, children build the picture of their own personality and establish basic trust to other people. The whole process of creating relationships in childhood is the key to emotional and

social development in future. Happy and joyful relations are the source of feeling of security and comfort. Failures in this field provide a source of tragedy. In order to gain trust within a family, parents have to be present in the earliest years of the child's life. Lack of presence in child's early life may disturb the sense of belonging to the family (Fojcik, 2007).

Older children, whose parents are away, experience constant loneliness and lack of understanding. They cannot accept the situation of living without their parents, hence they feel irritation and pain. The absence of a mother or father in the most important moments in a child's life is a solemn loss for a child and a serious disturbance of parenthood. At times, older children fulfill their parents' obligations. They help to run the house, they settle different matters, and they look after their siblings. Such premature responsibility deprives them of light-heartedness and happiness which is strictly connected with the period of childhood. On the other hand, however, it may constitute a positive phenomenon in the way of adapting to the separation. There are cases when young children are rebellious, angry and disobedient to their parents, they often leave home and seek support among peers. The lack of parents' authority results in searching for the authority beyond home. Nonetheless, children very often fear when their parents leave home.

In some cases suicide attempts take place. Some children think they are useless, and as a result, they do not care about school obligations or they stop doing homework, because there is no one who would appreciate their effort. When parents come back home, it is not easy for them to adapt to a new situation again.

Children may feel the distance and alienation towards the father that had left for so long, or feel jealous of the mother. The father who had been absent, may feel as an intruder after coming back. Even wonderful gifts will not replace his long absence and will not establish new, positive relation. Such father will have to be very patient and work intensely to catch up on the

missing time. He has to rebuild his child's trust and overcome the atmosphere of unfamiliarity as soon as possible (Fojcik, 2007). Facing such challenge is not an easy task. A parent usually focuses on fulfilling child's financial needs, neglecting the emotional, crucial ones. Therefore, there is a difference of perspectives, which unfortunately causes child's feeling of suffering and harm.

A sense of isolation and loneliness which sometimes affects children and their parents, often accompanied by external symptoms and signs of orphanhood, is the sing of our times. It seems that one can be alone with their parents and family. The loneliness of a child resulting from longer parental departure to work abroad is particularly difficult. Sometimes one parent leaves, but sometimes both of them depart, so children deal with unfamiliar persons around. They suffer from feeling of loneliness, and even the best caregiver and expensive gifts from parents cannot replace a real home. Society is also subject to the effects of migration. In the case of immigration, particular attention is drawn to falling birth rates and the creation of a smaller number of families as more and more people live alone, strengthened by the opportunity to travel in search for work. Mass exodus of the population can also result in phenomena of multiculturalism or disappearance of traditional cultures leading to the creation of a uniforming mass of European culture. It seems, however, that the influx of migrants will increase the boundaries between different cultures, which is reflected in the fact that migrants deny their culture.

Unfortunately and sadly the problem of Euro-orphanhood is practically unsolvable as migratory departures are becoming more and more frequent, so the children will be brought up away from their parents. Polish accession to the European Union and opening the labour market entails a number of negative phenomena in relation to the family life and family itself. Given the scale of this phenomenon and the fact that it

relates to the most fragile and most susceptible to change participants of social life, it is necessary to pay more attention to this issue, analysing the causes and dynamics of this process, providing with a support system. So far, the only option is the departure with children, what would reduce the phenomenon of Euro-orphanhood, but concurrently increase the demand for caretaking services for family seniors. ■