GROUP SUPPORTING OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS DURING SCHOOL EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

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Abstract

It is well known that more than a half of families with foster children has various difficulties with school adaptation and education. According to the observations recently adopted children has such difficulties as well as long-termed ones. The majority of studies points out problems at all levels of child development after orphanage experience. According to our recordings one of the key problems lies in the difficulties of both foster children and their parents. For our work we made a quality interview to understand what foster parents feel and think about these school problems. It was filled up by thirty parents, and we saw that they have a high level of self-blame and a sense of responsibility for the situation.

In this regard a group of parents (12 mothers) was recruited from the respondents and 12 supportive meetings were held for them. During the work of the group the participants had shared their experience of the main school difficulties, and a joint discussion of its causes was held. The parents had altogether discussed different ways out of difficult situations, and that had provided each of them with invaluable support and had generalized their common resources. All of this made it possible to reduce the parents' anxiety and become aware of their experience as a part of the development of their relationship with a child. The following topics were brought up during the group work: the development of parenting as a process of personal growth and building relationships; the formation of boundaries in relations with children and the social environment. As a result, the parents' emotional state had changed, their anxiety had decreased and understanding of adopted children and their attitude to the situation was improved. Beside this the schooling of their children has changed during this period as well. In the paper below we discuss the main topics of the mentioned parents' group and main supporting methods for adoptive parents during their children schooling.

Keywords: schooling, adoptive parents, adoptive children, group work.

1 INTRODUCTION

The difficulties of children with the experience of orphanhood are known and described in modern scientific works. In Russia, these difficulties include: the unwillingness of teachers to work with such children and the lack of coordinated actions between all participants in the educational process. Solomatina and co-authors highlight the following difficulties of children with experience of orphanhood, brought up in an adoptive family: "lack of high-quality preschool training; psychological features that hinder successful learning; non-constructive interaction of teachers with a adopted child without taking into account the specifics his development and psychological characteristics; lack of psychological and pedagogical knowledge of substitute parents" [1].

We believe that in addition to all the above difficulties, such a family faces an assessment of it as a full-fledged family at the time of the child's admission to school. And this in turn leads to increased anxiety among parents. This leads to a deterioration in the quality of life in the family and its ability to solve emerging problems). In our opinion, in addition to the described difficulties, a family with an adopted child faces an assessment of it as a family at the time of the child's admission to school, in this regard, the level of anxiety among parents increases. This, in turn, worsens the quality of life of the family and its ability to solve emerging problems. Adoptive families and their study are a long-standing subject of psychological science as in both in Russia [2,3] and abroad [4,5,6]. The selection of adoptive parents, issues of adaptation in family, assistance to an adoptive family. To date, the great effectiveness of group assistance programs is obvious, as shown in the work of Steinhauer [7]. This paper describes a two-year project of psychological assistance to adoptive parents, which was provided in individual and group form. The results showed that parents were more satisfied with group support. In general, the well-known effects of group psychological influence, such as mutual support, identification of and etc. They lead to faster and better results in the field of psychological changes. Within the framework of the project

to help adoptive children overcome barriers, it was revealed that adoptive children have school anxiety significantly higher than the normal. When searching for the causes of such results, a hypothesis was put forward that such a high level of anxiety in children may be due to parental anxiety.

We hypothesized that parents overestimate the learning difficulties of their children, prioritizing them while underestimating the impact of school anxiety about the child's learning opportunities.

In our opinion, there are several reasons for this:

1   In that case when a child experiences psychological difficulties, parents often perceive them as their "fault" that they do not create comfortable living conditions for their child. In a situation with an adopted child, the blame seems to double, since usually these are children who have already suffered greatly before being in an adoptive family.

2   In our culture, the degree of education and scholarship is still important, which is why there is an increased value of pedagogical assistance, since it is more understandable to parents

2   METHODOLOGY

A quality interview was created for adoptive parents of schoolchildren. The author's questionnaire included questions aimed at studying the experience of adoptive parents of the school situation: stigmatization of the adoptive family, experiencing oneself as a failing parent (feeling like a bad mother, experiencing shame, feeling like a victim of circumstances, finding ways out), blaming the school or the child in the current situation. 30 parents completed this interview, based on the results of which 12 parents were selected to participate in group work

Group participants: 12 women, average age 40+-3.2. Children age 7-9 (all are in elementary school), 7 women are married, 5 women are single. Characteristics of the accommodation of children: 1 family - a child in it less than 6 months, 5 families - children in a family for 4 years, 6 families - children adopted at the age of 1 year In Russia, a 5-point grading system has been adopted at school. Really most children did not study badly (for grades 4 and 5, (A and B) several children had grades 3 (C) for several subjects)

Intervention: Group work with parents.

Psychological group work in Zoom format was conducted with parents experiencing a high level of anxiety.

First meeting. The parents got to know each other through a short story about themselves and what brought them to this group. The objectives of participation were formulated. The topic for discussion proposed at this group is what is well-being and what is a problem. The form of working with the problem proposed in this group is to describe it in the form of an animal, which allowed the adopted child to safely touch his difficulties parenthood, while being aware of their condition.

The claims against the children from the parents were of the following nature:

• They run around during recess, play aggressively (there is no true aggression, but they do not calculate their strength and can cause trouble to others).

• They do not hear requests and do not do what they are asked quickly enough.

• They are very touchy and close up, and then they begin to take offense and occupy all their free time with conversations.

• They throw things around and are rude to their elders - they raise their voice, they can call and push.

• They don't want to do their homework and their preparation causes huge conflicts.

The main fears of adoptive parents were identified:

– Violation of borders.

– High demands of society.

– Fear of not coping.

– Worries that the child will go downhill and he will not have a future.

– Fatigue and impotence and helplessness.

– Unpredictability of the child's behavior .

This was followed by a metaphorical exercise: how to tame an animal. The results of discussion about taming of the animals:

Won't help

- TRAINING
- ISOLATION

Required behavior

- To study the nature of behavior and how it was formed
- Your reactions to behavior – don't they reinforce it
- Go beyond his level and establish partnerships
- Develop rules (carrot and stick)
- Set free

The second meeting. The topic of the second meeting is adaptation to school, what it is and the causes of adaptation disorders. The psychological, pedagogical and social causes of the violation of school adaptation, the concept of readiness for school were discussed. They also touched upon the topic of the family system and its interaction with the school.

During the group there were many discussions on the topic of high demands from the school to children and parents. The idea was revealed that the school unites the failure of children and parents, negative assessments from teachers are presented in such a way that parents feel guilty. Parents feel like bad parents, worrying that they are not coping with the upbringing of children. As a result, they do not enjoy studying together with their children, their motivation to work together on school lessons decreases. They face the experience of helplessness. Besides, mothers who are over 40 years old today were brought up in different conditions, during revolution parents were not up to children, everything was aimed at survival, so they cannot understand why their children are not set up to behave in the same way as them.

Meetings 3-6. The topic of discussion at these meetings was psychological boundaries with children and in children. There was a discussion on issues of forming boundaries and how an adult forms them and how a child reacts to it. What you need to study in yourself, how to build your own boundaries. The group was also given homework on the topic: borders.

As a result of the group's homework, the following components of psychological boundaries were identified:

- Control and understanding of the responsibility and capabilities of the child
- Trust
- Interest
- Faith
- Sincere expression of one's own emotions, and acceptance of the child's emotions
- Accepting a child's emotions
- The ability to talk about their needs and accept the needs of the child
- Pride
- Joy

Based on this homework, the group participants were asked to see what happens to these components in other relationships – with close and not close people.

As a homework assignment, it was suggested to discuss these components with children in order to form common values. To complete this task, joint activities were recommended: viewing pictures, watching cartoons, drawing together, etc.

It is necessary to observe whether we give it to children and ask them how to give and share responsibility – you can already talk about it with all children - starting a conversation about what was important to you and how they think what is important to them. And agree together on what they bring and what you bring , and rejoice together in the result and discuss, considering any progress an achievement

In addition, the criteria of weak borders, violated borders and ways to restore them were discussed.

7-th meeting was devoted to the analysis of Ego states: Adult, Child, Parent.

It was interesting for parents to explore themselves, to find out their leading Ego state, to discuss the peculiarities of behavior and to find out what they are achieving in this or that Ego state. In addition, the participants of the group were able to discuss which Ego states have the most resources when implementing various parental tasks, as well as the risks and resources of each state.

8-th meeting was dedicated to messages from his parental family and what was formed in the character, thanks to them.

9-th meeting. The specifics of the formation of parenthood (considered as a discussion of three components - emotional, cognitive and behavioral). Next, the group discussed parental feelings, parental attitude and parental position.

The 10-th meeting was devoted to the styles of family education, their features and stages of their formation. All parents usually have their own school experience, which is reflected in their expectations and ideas about how their child should learn. This style of learning is not always suitable for a child who came to a family from other living conditions. The discussion of diverse styles allowed parents to think about developing a new learning style that suits them.

11-th meeting was given over to the formation of the host position, the discussion of the signs of an adult person again.

12-th meeting was devoted to summing up the results of the work in the group. Parents shared the changes that had occurred in their relationship with their children during their participation in the group. Some families were able to improve their relationship with the school in such a way that the need for education ceased to be excessively stressful. All parents said that group support especially the possibility to find out what was going on in other families, played a supportive role.

3 RESULTS

Qualitative changes are presented in the Table 1 below. They reflect dynamics of psychological states in children and parents and things are still remain tough.

Table 1. Family's changes after group work

Parents	Children	Remaining difficulties
Parents began to slow down and formulate tasks and requests more clearly	Children began to listen to their parents more often if they slowed down	In a small amount of time for simple communication - a lot of lessons
Parents began to wait more time for the children to answer the questions that were taken	Children began to tell their parents more simply about the world around them, and not just about school because parents began to ask more	There is fatigue from having to analyze your behavior
Parents began to look closely and observe the emotions of the children and became interested in the relationship of the cause and consequences	Children began to ask for help more often	Hard to change stereotypes that have been established since childhood
Parents began to understand that the child tries to be good, but then gets tired of it and the difficulty of controlling emotions begins	Children ate raising their voice less and Their speech has become richer	It is difficult to argue with the grandparents and it takes strength not to expect understanding from them.
They began to speak easier and Shorter	Children try to justify their requests more	It's also very scary to listen to other people's ratings, especially negative ones
Parents began to enjoy the result together	More often they admit mistakes and try to discuss with their parents what they have given them	

It came to an understanding that there are boundaries and how they are violated		
Both parents began to communicate with their children more often		
Parents began to talk more often about their feelings		
Parents began to relax more together		
Mothers began to leave their children with their fathers and grandmothers more often and take care of themselves		

4 CONCLUSIONS

The accomplished work shows the effectiveness of group support for adoptive parents, built on a combination of information and therapeutic work with group members. The opportunity to react to their emotional states, to share fears and experiences in a group, to learn that other parents face the same difficulties gives an undoubted psychotherapeutic effect for parents, which leads to an improvement in their understanding of what is happening and to a different quality of interaction with children. In turn, the change attitudes to what is happening, reducing parents' feelings of guilt, frees up psychological space for interaction with the school, for building a constructive dialogue with teachers.

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