

## Family Counseling With A Child With Learning Disabilities or Disability

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### ABSTRACT

In this study we present the term counseling that should be used by parents who acquire a child with a disability or learning disabilities as well as the role of counselor and parent during the counseling process.

**Aim:** The main purpose of the article is to approach the concept of family counseling with a child with learning disabilities or disability. The relevant counseling that should be followed is presented, the role of the counselor is also discussed, as well as the role of the parents in the process.

**Method:** A review of the literature related to family counseling was made and the most representative articles on the concept were selected.

**Conclusions:** Counseling for families with children with special needs, whether it is some kind of disability or a special learning disability, can offer a better quality of life, peace of mind and clarity in order to help the child properly and effectively.

**Keywords:** Counseling; Learning disabilities; Disability

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is generally accepted the belief that counseling intervention in families with children either with disabilities or with learning difficulties or generally with special needs is necessary. It is therefore necessary to understand how essential the science of counseling psychology is and how long a counselor can stand by parents who have children with special needs, in order for them to provide the appropriate help to their child and finally to harmonize daily life of their family.

### **Children with special needs.**

The term "special needs" refers to children with disabilities who are classified into categories according to the problems they face. These are a) Hearing problems, b) Vision problems, c) Special learning difficulties, d) Autism, e) Mental retardation, f) Motor problems g) Behavioral disorders, h) Speech disorders, i) Personality disorders, j) Chronic diseases.<sup>[1,2]</sup> Children with disabilities need in addition to special pedagogical treatment and psychological support, which can be achieved through the counseling process, so as to meet their personal, educational, social and professional needs.<sup>[2]</sup> There is no doubt that the role of counselor or psychologist is absolutely necessary so that children and adolescents feel supported and safe in the above areas. At the same time, however, prevention must be extended to the family system. In other words, it is necessary for the parents of children who face some problems to seek the appropriate counseling and psychological help, so that they can realize and at the same time understand early on the needs of their children, but also to support and unwind themselves psychologically.

### **Having a child with special needs.**

Having a child without a doubt is one of the most important experiences of our lives. But it ends up being the most painful, when what we had dreamed of suddenly collapses because the child we brought into the world does not live up to our dreams. As a result, completely unprepared parents view the event as a disaster, resulting in psychological shock, which determines their later life.<sup>[3]</sup> The treatment of this event by the parents is divided into two phases:

- a) The divisive phase according to which most parents are in a state of shock and subconsciously often have abominable thoughts such as for example thinking that they would prefer their child or even to die themselves. The most common reaction in the end is for parents to try to give birth to another child, to make their regrets more bearable and to restore their self-confidence and morale.
- b) The recovery phase of the relationship during which there is a variety of reactions. Most of the time the parents are too attached to the child and consciously conflict with his disability. In this second phase, it is necessary to be properly informed and supported by expert counselors, so that parents can more easily accept their child's problem, feel relieved and therefore be able to function more effectively.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **Defining Counseling**

The term Counseling presupposes working with individuals but also with couples, during which the counselor manages to discover as well as to explore the methods that will bring him a more creative and satisfying life.<sup>[4]</sup> This type of counseling helps parents actually discover the extent of their child's disability and assess their developmental prospects. It also enables them to be more decisive but also to implement their decisions more effectively. Also during the sessions the parents learn the ways that will help them to mobilize and offer their child more help. Still, through counseling they gain more courage and thus develop over time defense mechanisms of survival. The path of early counseling, that is, according to,<sup>[5]</sup> offers long-term benefits to the whole family.

### **The role of the Consultant**

In order for a Counselor to implement a correct counseling intervention and to give accurately and without evasions a correct information, it is certain that he must possess the necessary theoretical and practical training so that he has the ability to guide correctly as well as to support them psychologically. Parents of children with special needs. The counselor must possess the correct knowledge on the disorders he is called to deal with and of course on the counseling and psychology. The main roles of the Consultant are three. Primarily, they have a therapeutic role as their job is to help people cope with this difficult phase of their lives. Their second role is a preventive role as it prevents the anticipated difficulties that the family may face in the future. The third role of the counselor is educational and evolutionary because it enables people to plan how to get the most out of their experiences which will enable them to discover and accomplish everything they are capable of achieving. He must also accept himself to be intelligent, to be dignified and above all to be possessed by humanity and compassion.

### **The role of the parent**

Nowadays parents can play an active role during their children's rehabilitation therapy. It is easily understood that parents have the ability to observe their children's daily behaviors that do not manifest themselves during the examination or visit to a health professional. They can also be involved during their participation in psychological support and early intervention programs and most of the time manage to have amazing therapeutic results.<sup>[6]</sup> Parents who seek and receive special help are able to act therapeutically as far as their children's behavior is concerned and by using the programs and treatment strategies, manage to successfully deal with the difficulties that their child faces during treatment and rehabilitation. Also, parents who are trained in counseling, are able to perceive inadequate behaviors, such as speech difficulties, difficulties in self-care and behavioral issues. Thanks to the knowledge they have acquired, they are able to judge which methods are appropriate and choose them, so that they can intervene and help immediately and prevent such behaviors, such as outbursts of laughter or anger and other outbursts. In addition, they know when it is necessary to support their child and how to reach the desired behavior slowly.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **The advisory process**

Throughout the counseling process, it is important for parents to be informed as clearly and accurately as possible about the report, the diagnosis, the prognosis and the ways to deal with the problem.<sup>[1]</sup> There are many counseling theories with similarities and differences between them and with their own counseling procedures. The following steps are followed in the counseling process in which the Counselor and the Counselor participate.

**Stage 1:** The Counseling process begins with the first contact of the counselor and the Counselor, who by creating a good psychological climate, set the desired goals.

**Stage 2:** In this stage, the relationship between the Consultant and the Consultant is built, which is the most important element that will lead to the success of the counseling process. Here the Consultant has the dominant role, since he is the one who with his correct behavior should facilitate the smooth outcome of the process. This will be

achieved more easily, since it positively affects the Counselor, who, by adopting his personal way of thinking, now helps and believes in himself. The purpose of this second stage is to create the right climate of trust that will help parents express how they feel, express doubts and discuss the goals they have set for their child.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Stage 3:** This stage leads through the development of a positive relationship between the Consultant and the Consultants in setting and delimiting the goals.

**Stage 4:** After setting the goals, the Consultant, taking into account the personalities of himself and the Consultant, applies his scientific knowledge in order to choose the appropriate consulting method.

**Stage 5:** This stage is the end of the whole counseling process. This process is therefore considered successful when the initial goals have been achieved.<sup>[7]</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

With the right guidance and support of families of children with special needs, it is possible in our time, as we saw above, for these families to find their own tactics for solving the problems they face as well as to use various techniques in their personal daily lives. You put more emphasis on these elements of the family that are considered more positive as well as on gaining in terms of self-confidence.<sup>[8]</sup> In other words, counseling for families with children with special needs, whether it is some kind of disability or a special learning disability, can offer a better quality of life, peace of mind and clarity in order to help the child properly and effectively.

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