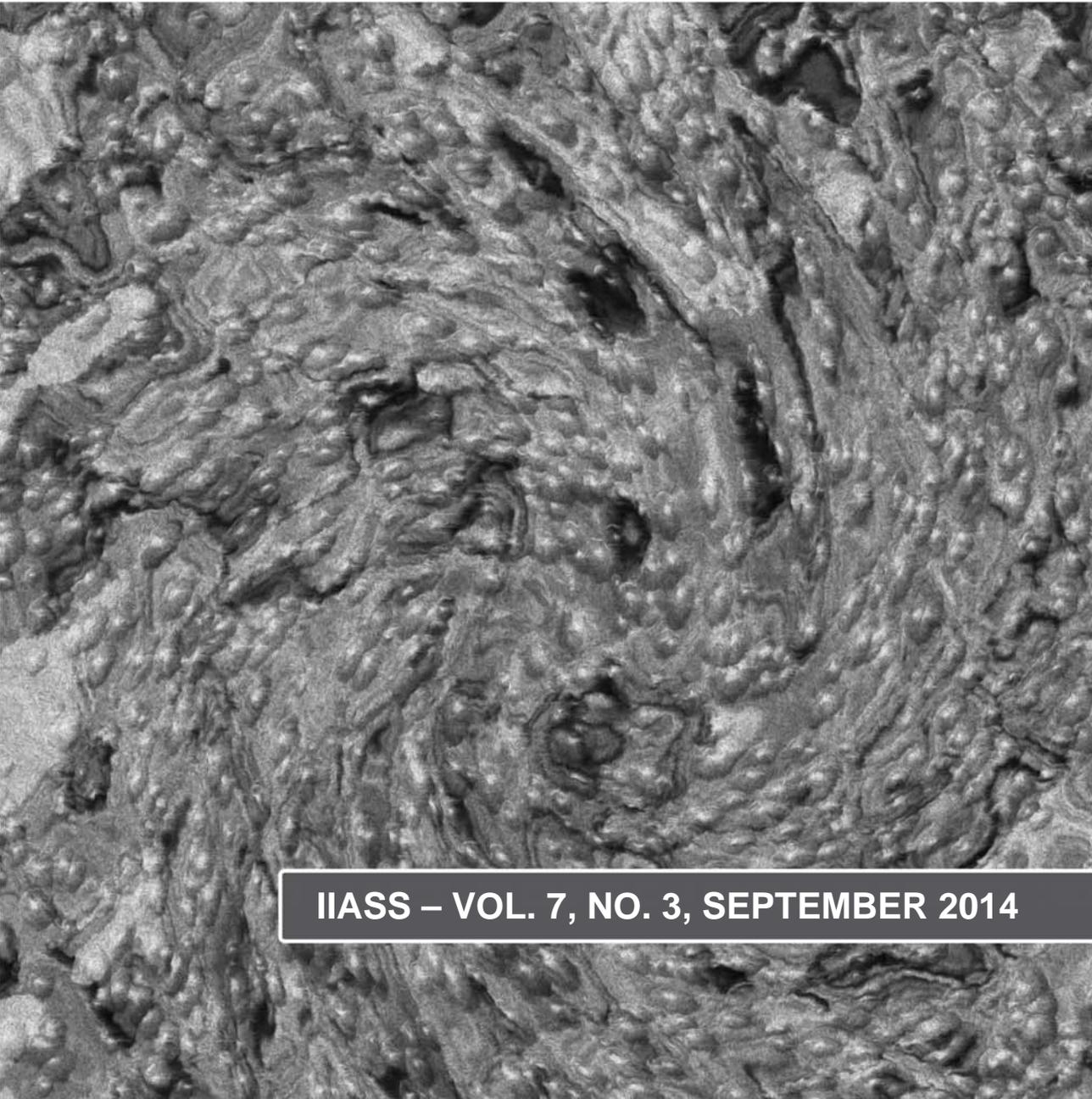


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A PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC TREATMENT OF PSYCHOSOMATIC PROBLEMS: PRESENTATION OF THE CASE

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Abstract

We talk about a psychosomatic illness when we are referring to a painful emotional behavior (headaches and back pains are among the most typical) where no structural changes on tissue or organs occur. Partner therapy, which addresses health problems of both spouses, exposes the connection between a bad condition and a bad relationship. As it will be possible to see from the presented extracts of the present therapeutic conversation, their relationship is based mainly on control, criticism, reproaches, blame, power measurements, failed attempts to exert control, gaining attention, acceptance and consideration. For many years now, they have been living in a vicious circle, full of controlling behaviors and thus losing— each in their own way - control over their own lives and their marriage.

The presented case is a presentation of the harmful use of the psychological behaviors of external control in a partner relationship. The psychotherapeutic process involving the couple shows a way to create new figures, through which the spouses can appease their basic psychic needs more successfully and regain control over their lives and their marriage.

Key words: psychosomatic problems, psychotherapy, counselling, partner therapy

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Presentation of the case¹

Ana and Ivo² are an older married couple who has been living for many years in an unsatisfying, even painful relationship. Their marriage does not reflect the traditional values – to be considered, respected, appreciated and, of course, loved. The couple lives in a marriage that differs immensely from the traditional idea of marriage. Their creative system tries to find a way to restore control in their marriage, but these attempts throughout the years have been unsuccessful. That is why they opted for therapy.

Mrs. Ana talked about her creative thoughts – what was she prepared to do to have her husband all to herself or to be more appreciated and respected than his husband's mother. Through her frustrations she tries to deal with ordinary emotional behaviors, like complaining and being angry, and she is slowly turning her dissatisfaction into depression.

Their resistance against trying to exert control over one another and their unsuccessful attempts to control themselves present themselves in a hurtful way, also with pains³. Mrs. Ana suffers from severe and frequent headaches and Mr. Ivo has a drinking and some somatic problems (he complained a lot because of a lower back pain). Both spouses are overweight.

Ivo's drinking is a typical attempt to feel like he escaped the control that is exerted over at home, but this intoxication is just making him lose control over his own life.

Part of the first conversation – it was intended as to establish a connection, a safe therapist-client relationship, to familiarize with the problems and thus interpret them, to identify the behaviors in their relationship and for my interpretation of what I saw and heard – is already giving some insights and the gaining of new beliefs for both clients.

T: You say it's time to change your life. What are you thinking about?

¹ The recording was prepared in accordance with the therapeutic modality, of which I, as the author of the article, have a European diploma of psychotherapy, and supervised by a supervisor of reality psychotherapy.

² The text has been published with the permission of the clients.

³ Before the conversation both clients assured me that no medical examination had shown any organic cause for their problems.

I: We realized that we cannot continue this way. We are not getting any younger and our life is getting too difficult. I think that we cannot continue like this, something has to be done.

T: Can you describe what you have in mind when you say that your life is too difficult? What do you mean by saying that you cannot go on like this?

I: I cannot talk normally with her anymore. Whatever I say is wrong. She starts rolling her eyes, or she swings her arm and she tells me to go somewhere, or she replies curtly. And then the fight starts, because I can't stand the way she talks to me. I'd like to talk to her, but it's impossible.

A: You don't want to talk, you want to give orders, so that everything would be as you say. And if I don't agree, there's a fight coming.

I: Then why do you just turn your back and leave? You don't talk!

A: Because you're getting on my nerves, I can't stand you and your mother anymore. From the moment that I set foot into the household, it's been more than thirty years ago, there was never a stake on my plate, like I'm not part of your family. You know (she turns to me), I've had it, I'm worn down. I can't do this anymore.

T: I believe that during the years there's a lot of unpleasantness that accumulates itself in a marriage and because of that we are unhappy and we don't feel good in such a marriage. You two already came to the conclusion that you don't want a marriage like that. I'd like to know what expectations and hopes for your marriage brings you here. Do you want to preserve your marriage and work on it in order to improve it, or are you thinking about divorce? What do you want, what are your thoughts on the subject? Mrs. Ana?

A: I'm not thinking about separation, although it's hard, I won't say it isn't. We had crisis all the time and we survived them. A separation or a divorce is not an option, where would I go, I don't have anything mine and I have just enough money to survive. But in spite of all that I don't want to end the marriage.

T: So it means that you're prepared to invest in your marriage, to contribute to its improvement?

A: Yes, even if I don't exactly know what it means to work on it.

At first I thought it was a too early for a professional point of view, for explaining the choice theory 1, especially because I haven't checked yet

¹ Choice theory is a new form of psychology which explains that we and we alone chose everything that we do and our decisions are based on various reasons. This includes also the dissatisfaction that we feel. We chose all of our activities and thoughts,

if the other spouse wants help too. I could only assume that they came with a common goal. Despite the hesitations, I thought it was a good opportunity for me to talk about the possibility of choosing behaviors – behaviors that build and strengthen a relationship, and behaviors that are “deadly” for a marriage. I related to what Mrs. Ana said before and started encouraging.

T: It's good that you said you are going to work. I believe that each one of us can chose and control his own behavior, but not the behavior of others. And that the behaviors we chose are very important for our relationships. By choosing behaviors like insulting, reproaching, blackmailing, threatening and more, we contribute to the destruction of a relationship, or in this case a marriage. But on the other hand, with behaviors like listening, supporting, considering, respecting, accepting, we strengthen and consolidate the relationship. If your goal is to save the marriage, then it would be proper to use the kind of behaviors that improve and strengthen it.

A: I understand, but I don't know if this can be applied when he comes home drunk and he despises me and insults me. How can I respect him then?

T: With difficulty. Maybe it would be better if for start you realized that you can control only your behavior and not your husband's too.

A: I know that, because no matter what I do, he always does things his own way.

T: Good. I suggest we stop there a little. I'd like to ask you too, Sir, what do you want regarding your marriage.

I: I thought I wouldn't get my turn today, that she'd do all the talking as always.

I deliberately ignored his reproaches and by that I wanted to show him that he cannot control me with that kind of pressuring attempts. I calmly repeated the question.

T: Do you want help for your marriage?

I: Of course I do, that's why I'm here. We don't need help from others to pack our things and go our separate ways.

T: Good. What do you think about the idea that you can control only your own behavior?

and indirectly we also chose our feelings and a good part of our physiology (Glasser 2007a).

I: To control my own behavior? Does this mean I cannot make her obey me?

T: Yes, that's what it means.

I: That's not true. I can make her obey me.

T: But she alone decides if she'll obey you. In that moment it's a better decision than not obeying, especially if there threatening is involved. But your wife can choose differently. She chooses her own behaviors, you cannot choose them for her. Can I make you do something that you don't want to?

I: No, you can't, that's not possible.

T: That's correct. And you too can't control my behavior. That is the choice theory. It asserts that the only behavior that we can control is our own.

A: Then why do I have to do everything that he tells me?

T: Do you really have to? Do you really do everything that your husband tells you to?

A: No, not everything, but most of it.

T: But at the end you are the one who decides whether to do it or not.

A: I've never thought about it this way. It seemed to me that I have to, that it's not my decision.

T: Yes, these kind of realizations give you back the feeling of control over your own life, that in fact are we the ones who choose and reach a decision. But we opt for what seems better at the moment. Our behavior has always a purpose, we want to attain something with it, maybe even for someone to leave us alone.

I: I can agree with that. She provokes me, but when I say something, when I show who the master of the house is, it all goes wrong.

T: If we said that we can control our own behavior, then my behavior doesn't depend on someone else's behavior. Therefore, I don't need to behave like someone else does, or as someone else expects. I can decide otherwise. I have that possibility. And becoming angry is a behavior and thus I can decide not to choose it.

I: Yes, maybe, I think that's very difficult. We were taught this way.

T: I agree, in time our behaviors can become part of our habits. At least the ones with which it seems like we're gaining something, but in reality, they're harmful. We'll talk more about this later. We have to abandon this kind of behaviors or replace them with new, more effective ones in order to feel better.

A: Yes, I'd like to feel better again.

T: Could you pay attention to the kind of behaviors that you choose until our meeting next week? Would you try to choose more behaviors that would bring you closer, establish a more solid connection between the two of you, so that you can feel better in your marriage.

A: So, I'll take care of my own behavior?

T: Yes. That's exactly what it means. And you, Mr. Ivo, try to take care of your own behavior, use the ones that will get you closer to you goal – to feel good in your marriage.

I: I agree. Everyone takes care of his own behavior.

T: This means that you won't reproach, threat or insult one another, that you'll be attentive, take each other into consideration, listen to each other, try to be well disposed to one another. Is that acceptable for you?

A: We'll try and we'll see how it goes.

In my first conversation with the clients my goal was not to take sides, neither hers nor his, but I have to take the side of their marriage. That is why they came to me. I was very attentive of that, because I was aware of the fact that otherwise I might "lose" one of them, and that would impact our further work and their marriage. This is why I was constantly using the word marriage, so they would realize that we are talking about a thing, common to both of them, and that it will be the focus of our future work.

Maybe the agreement regarding their behavior until next meeting is a little too general, at this moment they certainly do not know what exactly means for them, in their everyday life. I think that it's important for them first to become aware of their choosing of behaviors and to gain the feeling of deciding (for themselves, not for the other one), so in the future we will be able to discuss some activities that they could do together for the sake of their marriage.

During our next meeting I first focused on their choices regarding their behavior in the past week during which we did not see each other. As expected, it turns out that the stimulus-response psychology¹ is deeply rooted in their subconscious and that it is not possible to get rid of it in such a short period of time, therefore I will repeatedly talk about it and try to explain it, estimate it, try to make them aware of it in order to make them really believe that they chose whether to act this way or not and that choice theory becomes their new belief.

¹ The stimulus-response theory (classic S /*Stimulus*/ and R /*Reaction*/ behaviorism) acknowledges only the human behavior as a part of psychology (the connection between stimuli and reactions), and ignores conscious actions, mentality and everything that belong in the "black box" (Watson). The period of the "reigning stimulus" (Thurstone v Musek, 2003: 17) still lasts. The mechanical S-R system is accepted by "almost every 'scientific' psychology, but what is more important, /.../ almost everyone believes in it." (Glasser, 2007: 39)

Further on I wanted to know what they still define as good in their marriage. I'm researching their sources, what is that on which we can work on, where can we find some possibilities for new and better choices.

T: Can you both, please, try to think about what are the good parts of your marriage? What are you satisfied with in your marriage?

I: I don't know what's good, but I know there's a lot of bad. The constant arguing, quarrels, she doesn't even want to eat anymore, let alone anything else.

A: Why should I eat with you when you don't even see me?! You eat with your mother. I, as your wife, don't even exist in that house. Your mother is the important one, not me!

I: It's not true, you know it's not true! Where should I put her? She's my mom.

A: And I'm your wife, but you are not as attentive to me as you are to her. You don't care about me. And she acts like you're hers.

I: You just think that. I do take care of you, what else am I doing? I take care of both of you, and the children too.

T: If I may interfere... This, what you were talking about now, is what is bad in your marriage. Let's look together at what's good. Could we say, Mrs. Ana, that Ivo is an attentive husband, father and also son?

A: Yes, I can say that he's attentive. He worries a lot when things look bad for us and there's not enough money. He does his best, he often works alone with meat and then he sells salami and sausages so it would be easier for us.

T: Does this give you a feeling of safety?

A: Yes, it does. I know that without him it would be a lot worse, I don't even know how it would be.

T: What else do you appreciate about Ivo?

A: I feel that he's not a womanizer, I'm not scared of that. He also doesn't burden me because of my looks. I'm week-eyed, these thick glasses, and also my years are showing in other ways. I don't remember him ever letting me know that.

I: To me she's still beautiful and I still want her.

T: It's very beautiful what you said. Can you tell this to her, to your wife?

I: Of course. Ana, to me you're still the most beautiful woman and you know I miss us sleeping together.

A: I have no interest in that anymore.

I: But I do. You didn't even hear that you're beautiful to me.

A: I did, what you said is beautiful, but in reality I don't feel that way, your behavior towards me doesn't make me feel that way. There are too many ugly words.

T: And now you have the chance to tell each other what you respect, admire about the other. Ana?

A: I don't know, he's hardworking, I can say that, he does a lot of work around the house. He and his mother reproach me with laziness and I don't know what more can I do! Like everything I do is not enough.

T: Let's stick with the good. Ivo?

I: Ana is an attentive housewife and a good cook. I have never complained about that. But this Sunday I made an effort and made roast meat and potatoes, and when I wanted the three of us to sit at the table, she started grumbling about the mess I made in the kitchen, the way I prepared the meal... Just because I didn't make it her way. She spoiled everything, I got mad and left.

A: To the bar. To play cards and drink.

I: Yes, to the bar, where I can relax.

T: We all feel better where we are accepted, popular, where no one tries to control us. And friends at the bar offer us just that. But we remain unhappy, unsatisfied in our relationships with other people. You told each other some good qualities, that could maybe help you getting forward. How could you satisfy your need for understanding, acceptance in your relationship?

A: I started to think that he feels much better in the bar with his friends. That's why he spends there so much time and why he goes there so often. I never understood what the hell he gets there?!

I: It's exactly how you said. No one bothers me there.

A: Are you saying that I bother you?

I: That's how I feel. I'll be honest. When I'm home I feel like being on rack, on one side it's you pulling me and on the other is my mother, and I just want to please you both.

A: Now I just realized that I have never asked you how you feel. All this time I've been concerning just about my dissatisfaction.

I: I think all three of us are unhappy. I feel like I should promise now that I'll never behave like I did until now.

T: It would be good for your relationship to abandon these behaviors, besides, you don't need to promise anything to anyone, just to yourself.

I: I think we should continue from where it turned bad the last time – from choosing these other, better behaviors. What do you say, Ana?

A: We didn't do very well last time. I agree that we should try again.

T: All right. Maybe this week you can make another step and try to choose behaviors that could bring you closer, maybe you could use some behaviors from the past that turned out to be good for you. By doing this you can pay attention to your feeling, how do you feel when choosing these new behaviors.

This text is, above of all, a display of a wide range of harmful behaviors for a marriage and for the individuals in it. A lot of reproaches, expressed several times (in order to be heard, taken into consideration), a lot of resentment, reciprocal blame, laying guilt, etc. In short, there is a lot of helplessness and unhappiness hidden in all these hurting behaviors, for which the couple (still) believes that these behaviors will help them change one another, that the other will realize what is doing wrong and how to do it right.

With no doubt, Mrs. Ana thinks she's the victim. Her posture and her words express her belief that she's being wronged, that she is a powerless victim and that others run her life. In her relationship with her husband and his mother she does not feel accepted, loved, important, etc., or in the language of choice theory; she does not appease her basic psychic needs¹ in her relationships with close relatives. That is why she started to develop auto destructive behaviors soon after they started living together. It was an attempt to appease her needs trying to change the behaviors of other people. Of course, she could not succeed because it is impossible to change the behavior of someone else. She did not develop her behaviors and her beliefs in her relationships with new people, that is why she is unhappy today, and her unhappiness manifests itself in various ways, as far as with mental health problems and pains.

Mr. Ivo took the position of the stronger one in their relationship. He has his wife and mother troubling themselves around him, which gives him a feeling of power, importance, worth. At the same time, it is possible to identify feelings like entrapment, powerlessness, because one side (the wife or the mother) always remains dissatisfied, because whatever he

¹ Glasser (2007a) defines the need for love (acceptance, belonging, cooperation), power (status, importance), freedom (independence, autonomy, creativity) and entertainment (learning new things, change and playfulness) as basic and universal psychic needs. They take place in centers in the newer parts of the brain, particularly in the cerebral cortex. These needs are being appeased through a person's activities and while interacting with other people (Zupančič, 1997: 135) and furthermore, they are vital for a person, regarding their place in the person's genetic material (ibid). Glasser (Zupančič, 1997: 135) believes that, in order to live, it is necessary to appease them on a daily basis, at least to a minimum dose. A successful appeasing of needs expresses itself through the feeling of contentment, in the realization that we can control the world, and in the rise of one's self and positive identity (Glasser, 2007a). Symptomatic behaviors are attempts of the organism to lower the frustration that arises when the client does not appease his basic needs and his creative system offers solutions through various emotional and physiologic behaviors (ibid).

does, he cannot take into consideration both of them (they are on two different sides). Moreover, he feels unsuccessful, because in reality he cannot manage to realize in the best possible way his belief that as the only man in the family, he has to provide for their financial safety. I think, these are his distresses and he expresses them through male forms of dissatisfaction, i.e. alcohol abuse and pains that are acceptable for men (back, lower back pains) and through that he tries to assure himself power and control.

I think it was important and also necessary to clearly tell to the couple what our main goal is –their marriage. We are not working on only one of them. Even though, if this time they have also tried to win me over “his or her” side, I persistently sided with their marriage. It seemed the only reasonable decision.

I would bode well for both spouses and their marriage to experience the effectiveness of new behaviors, otherwise they will hang onto their old beliefs about the effectiveness of external control psychology. It does not help that there is two of them and that the formed alliance, even if it is “rotten”, represents a risk that they will strongly cling onto old beliefs and persist in using destructive behaviors. If one or both of them preserve the external control psychology, there is a great possibility that their marriage will fail or that they will continue to unhappily live in it.

Further on I plan to explain to the clients the concept of holistic behavior 1 and to show them the connection between their health problems and their chosen behaviors and beliefs. But before that, I’m interested in their quality world, what are the images through which they try to appease their psychic needs. I foresee that it will be necessary to create new images that will replace the existing ones, which have or will prove themselves as unattainable, or maybe it will be necessary to create completely new images that will help them appease their needs more successfully. I’m also interested into the most important image in their quality world – their self-image.

T: You say that since you started using fewer forcing behaviors, you have fewer conflicts. I think that today we should take a look at the

¹ The concept of a holistic, flexible and creative behavior is the belief that we cannot separate the mental from the physical. A person’s physical activity, thinking, emotions and physiological phenomena are represented by four behavior components with which a person tries to “change the physical world as he experiences it into a world that closely resembles his quality world.” (Lojk and Lojk, 2011: 314)

activities that make you both happy and maybe you haven't done them in a long time or you haven't even tried them yet. What do you think?

A: I have a lot of desires but there's no money to realize them. And maybe I'll never be able to.

T: Can you tell me more about your desires?

A: Since I was young, I dreamed about how other parts of the world look like, how people live elsewhere. But in reality I've never gone anywhere, there's only work at our home. He never wanted to hear about what I want. I could only take care of the family and work. That yes, but having fun no, God no!

I: We have very different desires, you know. I enjoy working, but everything is difficult for her.

T: I suggest you focus on yourself. What is that make you happy, what do you want to do?

I: I like to stay home, I don't mind not going anywhere. Maybe, when the children were little I wanted to travel, but I dedicated all my time to building the house. In that period, I also didn't have time to fish so I gave it up. Sometimes I still think about it, I think that walking by the river and fishing calmed me, I felt a special peace, I was alone with myself, I remember the serenity that I felt.

T: Do you miss those feelings?

I: Yes, I miss them. I'm very nervous and I think that I can calm down only when I drink.

T: I invite you to think together about the things that you have in common. We believe that the children moving away from home often shows the holes that have formed in a marriage. But the time when children move out is also a chance for the spouses to "come first" once again and to dedicate themselves to each other.

I: I think that's what happened in our case. Ana has now become more annoying and unsatisfied because she can't turn her attention to our daughter and son so much.

T: Do you too feel the need for common activities?

I: Yes, I'd like to get close again. Our relationship has lots of holes, but I think that things calmed down a little, for one there's less fighting.

T: What are you thinking about, any ideas about where you see the two of you together?

A: So, as I know us, I'd say that we enjoyed ourselves by watching movies. I don't remember when was the last time we watched a good movie, now we follow politics and social themes. In the past I liked to have fun, I was relaxed, but I haven't seen myself like that in a long time.

I: I think it's a good idea. I'd be very happy to watch a movie.

T: You can watch a movie together, but I don't know how much would that help your relationship. We are talking about what's good for your

marriage. So, it would be better to find something that connects you, something personal. What do you say?

A: It's difficult to say what that would be. I think it's impossible to go anywhere, I don't know who would take care of his mother.

I: Barbara (their oldest daughter) can visit and take care of her, that shouldn't be a problem. The only question is where we would go. We cannot afford anything expensive at the moment.

T: Perhaps you would enjoy some alone time. When was the last time you were alone?

A: I don't remember I really don't. His mother was always there, which drives me to an even bigger despair.

I: Right now I was thinking about our farm, what if we go up there to take a look? I think that there is really peaceful and right now everything is green. Right now I wish I was up there.

A: And what will we be doing there? We'll work again. I'll cook and clean and you'll work around the house. Like when I'm home.

I: It wouldn't be like at home. And we don't need to work. I don't have that intention. We can enjoy the nature. We could go for a walk, down to the stream, you could pick snowdrops, we could lounge, talk. What do you say?

A: It's okay with me if we won't work. But I can really picture you taking walks and picking flowers (laughs). Can we stay more days?

I: If I say I won't work, then I won't work. I will take walks, but you'll be the one picking flowers (laughs). We can stay from Friday to Sunday.

A: You mean this weekend?

I: Yes, it's going to be really nice, weather wise.

A: Agreed, we're going.

T: Nicely done. I think it's important that in these three days you don't say or do anything that you know would destroy the good climate in your relationship and that would divide you. I wish you a nice weekend.

These kinds of conciliatory discussions between spouses are a good sign for their marriage. They try to come to an agreement, to compromise, say things that would not cause anger and accept (with humor) their characteristics. With that, the clients showed a real interest and willingness to save their marriage and that, despite everything, they both have enough optimistic consideration to continue. I think they reached a point where they really realize that it's up to them to change things and to make it all better, otherwise they risk increasing their unhappiness and completely destroying the marriage.

The purpose of common activities is to feel once more connected, to see each other in a different light, outside of everyday life, which they could not handle for some time. And what is more important, they are alone.

So the wife will not feel like she comes second in the competition for her husband's attention and he will not feel like he's on a rack between one and the other constraint. There is a possibility that they will awake old feelings, remember an old, good quality, but more importantly they will realize that they can still enjoy things – together and even after all these years.

Of course, we should not expect that these three days, as beautiful as they can be, can do miracles for their marriage. But it will certainly be a good start in the process of improving their relationship. In their feedback they said that it was “nothing special”, but that they haven't had such a nice time in years. They confessed to each other that they tried to enjoy as much as possible the time spent together and that they did not “come to any disagreements”. It is also very encouraging for their marriage that after several years they have been intimate again.

I think it's important to “revive” the images from their quality world, in the sense of what kind of a person I want to be, what makes me happy, what brings me joy, what do I need and how, or in which way I used to realize that. I understand the “revival” of the images in the quality world as an awakening of a person, because our thinking and our activities are in accordance with the created images, so our “personal album” is the source of our new choices. That is why I think that in the process of changing our beliefs and choosing new behaviors it's important for each person to become aware of the “images” in his “personal album”, because that is how he can recognize his desires and needs, but also the ways of how to reach, appease them.

Further on I'm going to present you the discussion in which I introduced to the couple the Glasser's “marriage circle” or the “rescue circle”.

T: You surely have noticed that from the beginning I've been talking about your marriage. We're talking about what's good for your marriage, how to preserve it, improve it, all this time we've been working on your marriage and for it. In your experience you sometimes still use the old controlling behaviors and you still encounter some problems. It's important that in these moments you know how to act for the good of your marriage. In that case you can rely on the solution circle, in which you enter once you realize that you're using destructive behaviors, with which you try to control or to change the other's behavior. In that case you can discuss about what can each of you – by taking into consideration the knowledge that you can control only your own behavior – do in order to solve the problem.

I: This means that I invite Ana to step into the circle if I start getting angry, because of something that isn't the way I want it? And then we talk?

T: Yes, in this circle you don't use destructive behaviors, not even anger, but other behaviors that are good for your marriage, for example listening, supporting, connecting, discussing and other behaviors that will bring you closer.

A: What if none of us mentions the circle, if we continue to argue?

T: You are the one who decide about that. When you have your marriage before your eyes and the realization that everything you do has to be for its good, I believe that you won't even have to use the circle that often, because you'll be solving your disagreements before that. But if you'll stick to your convictions, to what is important to each of you, you'll find yourselves on your old path and your marriage will find itself in a bad position again.

A: Just like everything really depends only on us.

T: I believe that it actually depends on you. No one can have as much influence on your marriage as the two of you. Like we established before, no one can make you unhappy unless you see and feel that way. There are no reactions to the stimuli, there are just choices.

A: I know, but I'm afraid that I'll start yelling and insulting him again when he comes home drunk. His drinking makes me angry. I mean, I get angry. What can I do in the circle with him if he's drunk?

T: What all this yelling at him about him being drunk brings you?

A: What does it bring me? It brings me nothing, I just get really angry.

T: I believe that it brings you something, otherwise you wouldn't yell at him and insult him. Does it perhaps give you a feeling of power, supremacy, and control over him?

A: And what can I do with that power if the next day I'm the one who's subjected to him again. He's the householder.

At this point, there was clearly presented an unsatisfied need of power, control and being heard in the relationship with her husband. I thought it was important to focus on it.

T: Can you obtain this power in some other way? You realized that the one you have when your husband is drunk doesn't last long. Can you find some other way to regularly appease this need?

A: I'd like to have the final word at least regarding the housekeeping. I think that lately he wants to take the lead on that too.

T: What does it mean to you to have the final word regarding the housekeeping, as you say?

A: That I'm the one who knows more about it.

I: But I do admit that you're more familiar with the housekeeping. When I do something little it's just to show you that I can do something too and that you don't need to spend all your time in the kitchen, it's not because you're not a good cook. It's far from that.

T: Can you see your husband's "involving" in the house chores in that way?

A: I can, I never thought that he has good intentions. I thought that he wants to teach me so I'd see how to do things right.

T: If we go back to the question about the behavior you choose when your husband comes home drunk. Do you believe that you'll prevent him from getting drunk again by attacking and insulting him?

A: No, I don't believe that anymore. Otherwise he'd have already stopped, considering that I've been attacking him because of that since we're together.

T: Now you know why you haven't had any success, because it's not in your power to change his behavior. But you can change yours. Or the attacking and insulting contribute to the improvement of your marriage?

A: Of course not. What should I do then?

T: What should you do? What kind of possibilities do you see?

A: I can turn around and continue to sleep.

T: What would you achieve with that?

A: I wouldn't get upset and there would be no fighting.

T: So this is a better choice than the former one.

A: Yes, it's better. But I'd still want to talk to him in the morning when he sobers up.

T: That would be reasonable. But without the insulting, criticizing, reproaching ...

A: I'll try not to use all that, and if I won't be able to do it, I'll use the circle.

T: What do you think about your wife's thoughts, Ivo?

I: I think it's almost impossible that there would be no screaming and attacking when I come home. I'll be very surprised if everything will be as she just said. I think I'll be coming home earlier than usual, because now I know what to expect, so it doesn't matter to me when I come home, I'm yelled at anyway. We'll see.

Further on I stirred the conversation towards the importance of a good relationship – a successful satisfying of the needs in their relationship by preventing the use of behaviors that give a person a false feeling of control over his life.

For Ana and Ivo, the rescue circle or the marriage circle represented a lifeline in situations where they couldn't abandon compulsory actions. Especially in recurrent frustrations, they frequently held on to old

behaviors and after some time they managed to make new choices, which is very positive for their marriage.

The clients thought about the connection between their mutual (lack of) understanding and their health problems. At one of our therapeutic meetings, they stressed their understanding of the holistic behavior and the explanation that a psychosomatic illness represents the destruction of our creative system. In that occasion, they performed a self-estimation regarding their new choices, the change of the adopted beliefs and their health problems (physic and mental ones).

A: I remember you saying once that we are the ones that create the bad feelings and health problems.

T: In a way, yes. It happens as a result of our best attempt to obtain what we desire, to realize the images we have of ourselves or of others, that are preserved in our quality world. That's why we talk about headaches, pains, depression – by using these, Glasser reminds us that it's our choice. And that give us the feeling of control. What's your experience?

A: It's difficult to get used to it, because we always used to say that we have a headache. I noticed that my head hurts when I'm upset and angry. Now I understand why. And I have a hard time to understand, as you say, what the thing that I get with these headaches is.

T: We discussed that our behavior is holistic, that by choosing what we will do and think, we indirectly influence our feelings and physiology, the activity of our organism. Deriving from this kind of understanding of the human behavior, we talked about new choices, therefore about new activities and the change of beliefs – our consideration about something. That's only logical. When people are in distress, we focus on the symptomatology, because that's what we feel, it's more noticeable. Let's say our heart is beating faster, our hands shake, we sweat, we feel a knot in our stomach, in the throat, we blush, etc. That depends on what our "talents" are. I just want to tell you that occupying ourselves with physic signs and also with feelings doesn't help us to feel better. These are just signals that we're not feeling well at the moment and that it's time to do a self-estimation – about what we think and do.

A: This explanation helps me a lot and it's very logical. We also talked about choices all the time. But I don't understand the fact that we choose pain.

T: In accordance with the choice theory, we understand the psychosomatic illness as an indirect creative choice. If we constantly use something, it tells us that it brings us something that we gain from it. Often, the illness can give us a certain amount of control over others, with the purpose of satisfying our needs. It's typical for people who

suffer from a psychosomatic illness that they keep inside their anger, resentment, a controlling emotional behavior that for some unknown reason they don't show, because it may not be in accordance with the beliefs they adopted. One of these labels is: "boys don't cry" or "if you get angry, you're ugly".

A: I was always told that as a woman, I have to endure. But a man doesn't have to?!

T: Probably not, Eva was conceived from Adam's rib and after that the poor woman offered him an apple (laugh). I'm saying that numerous stereotypes originate from Christian traditions and they are embedded in our thinking, our beliefs, they are the filter of our perception and our activities are in accordance with our beliefs.

I: What we decide to do and how do we decide to act is very important. When I think about that I don't know what's right anymore. Is it better to get angry or to repress the anger?

T: By getting angry we just try to control someone else, to make him do what we want. It's not that we repress our anger, but it's about looking at other's people behavior in an another way, so we don't get angry by thinking or looking at that and we find some other ways to appease our needs in our relationship towards this person in more successfully. By improving our relationships and appeasing our physical needs, we don't need destructive creativity. And that is the purpose of therapy – to regain control over your life with new and better choices.

In the therapeutic process I haven't paid any attention, at least not directly, to the symptomatology (pains, overeating, alcohol abuse, etc.). Because in accordance with the choice theory I presumed that the presented symptoms are caused by an important unsatisfying relationship (the two spouses came to therapy with the same self-evaluation in mind). Means that the spouses do not appease their basic physic needs in their relationship, at least not successfully, and they are victims of the external control psychology or maybe both, or at least one of them, use it.

I always followed this conviction when the spouses started describing the symptoms, complaining about their physical problems. Trough questions, thinking and acting, I "posed" them on the "front wheels" of their holistic behavior. It seemed that neither of them noticed that, at least to the point that they stopped talking about their symptoms.

By choosing new behaviors the spouses managed to choose more connecting and less destructing behaviors at the end of the therapeutic process. They started to do more common activities, which represented

a new way of appeasing their psychic needs that have been neglected for many years.

Conclusion

The presented case includes the clients' story and the interpretations of their problems, the therapist's understanding of his clients' problems according to the concepts of the choice theory, a summary of parts of the discussion that are important for reestablishing the relationship, for discovering the clients' quality world, for understanding the clients' efforts, for making the clients abandon their beliefs of external control psychology and accept the beliefs of the choice theory. The case study shows also a recording of the therapist's internal dialogue and her professional interventions (she presents to the clients the essence of the choice theory). The article is also an explicit presentation of establishing and developing the therapist-client relationship in terms of a therapeutic way to achieve an objective and it is also a presentation of improving one's mental health by discovering and acquiring the choice theory, which contributes to the person's autonomy, their independence from the therapist.

From the present display case it is possible to gather some characteristic behavioral patterns that have a destructive influence on a relationship and to a person's mental and physical health. The clients put a lot of energy in trying to control others or escaping others' control. By doing that, they use a controlling, or other destructive forms of behavior. It is evident that both clients try to appease their physical needs in ways that are unsatisfying, or even frustrating and destructive, which they express with somatization and mental distress. Their bad physical conditions are connected to their dysfunctional beliefs and destructive behaviors are tied to gender and social acceptance of somatization. Both clients have problems establishing and developing satisfying relationships.

The loss of control over their lives is reflected in the acquiring and/or exerting control behaviors in a cause-and-effect thinking and acting. In this kind of situation the clients are confronted with the realization that they alone, directly or indirectly, choose what they later complain about. They maintain their position as victims and the orientation towards a physiological and emotive component of holistic behavior. Before they attended the therapeutic process the activity component was completely inactive.

The regaining of the clients' control over their life was determined by choosing more effective behaviors and thinking. When the clients

learned how to remove external control from their lives, they started to change their at that time present unsatisfying relationships. Changing the perception and understanding of their own actions enables them to appease their basic physical needs in a more effective way and to regain control over their life. The clients' key realization is that they can control and change only their own behavior and not anyone else's.

The care for a (equilibrated) appeasing of the physical needs considers the clients' personal world of values, beliefs, images, ideas, etc., consideration of reality and search for solutions, better choices within the given possibilities (environment). This includes also taking care of existing relationships.

The base of the whole psychotherapeutic process is represented by the therapist-client relationship. In his relationship with the client, the therapist follows the value of human dignity, he accepts and respects a person in his uniqueness and entity and he does not predict or control his behavior.

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