

DANI

a case study

by

Aviva ben Sira

Dani, 3½, came to me quite by chance when he accompanied another child who was regularly under my care. He seemed to be very nervous, impatient, very fearful of failure and became tense if he did not succeed immediately. He tried to achieve his goal by nagging and imposing his will.

He played an interesting game over and over again. He shut little dolls into a doll's house and warned them, "Don't go out, it's dangerous outside".

This arose in me an association with fears of his being born. I covered a chair with a blanket and proposed to the children to crawl under the blanket. The other child did so with great pleasure. Dani attempted to do so but stopped short and seemed very scared.

In the Kindergarten he had problems with his peers and looked aggressive and unhappy. I invited in his mother who told me she had a baby girl, but was also going to be divorced. She explained that at home Dani was very difficult. There were big problems of separation and even at home Dani clung to her. She felt though, at the same time, that Dani hated her.

I asked how his birth had been. She explained it had been very quick.

Dani had a purple mark on his neck and I asked his mother how he had got it. She explained that although the birth was very easy there had been problems during the pregnancy. In the fourth month of pregnancy she had a late abortion followed by a curetage. Two weeks after this she felt some strange movement in her womb. It was the twin brother, Dani.

The doctor told her that Dani's mark was caused by injury during the curetage.

I suggested to her that we try and reconstruct the foetal period and birth. She agreed and next time came with Dani. I told him we were going to play a new game, that he would be a very tiny baby inside his mother and then he would be born.

"OK", he said.

He lay on the bed in a foetal position with closed eyes and sucking his thumb according to my instructions. First of all I helped him relax and told him his story from the beginning; from the meeting of the

sperm and ovule, the journey of the zygote through the Fallopian tubes to the womb, describing the process of differentiation, the attachment to the womb, and being protected by the amniotic fluid and tissues.

Suddenly, he sat down panic stricken and shouted, 'Enough!'.

I asked him what had happened.

'Enough! I don't want it anymore'.

'OK' I said, 'I am not going to force you but tell me what happened to you'.

'Somebody is throwing me out'.

'Who is somebody?'

'Another child! Enough!'

'Let's take a break', I said, 'but afterwards we shall continue'.

'OK', he promised, but I think he wanted to stop the game.

After 10 or 15 minutes I suggested we continued.

'No - I am not going on!'

'You promised', I said. 'If you don't want to go on. at least let's talk about it'.

'Somebody is throwing me out!' he said, and his face was once more panic stricken.

'Who?' I asked.

'A child', was his reply.

'What is his name?'

'Beni', he said.

'And how?' I asked.

'He is pulling me', he said, whilst at the same time he pulled at his shirt.

'Is he succeeding at throwing you out?'

'No, but it hurts because he is pulling and scratching'.

I had an idea and brought out a rag doll as big as a real child, and I asked him,

'Could this be Beni?'

'Yes', he said.

He took the doll and hit it and screamed at it in great anger. Finally he threw the doll on the floor and stamped on it.

'Now you have plenty of room and you can be born!'

He sprang very happily on the bed and said tenderly - 'with Mummy'.

We reconstructed the birth and he passed very quickly through his mother's legs. I remembered she had said he had been born very quickly.

I encouraged her to take her little baby, hold him and tell him how much she loved him and how happy she was he had been born. She was very reluctant and emphasized that in their family they did not express feelings. It was incredible how insensitive the mother was and how she did not allow herself to perceive the powerful situation that had emerged.

Dani did not want to go with his mother. He wanted to listen to the tape that had been recording the session.

The next morning I saw Dani in the Kindergarten. He looked very upset and told me he had fallen down. I felt that something more serious was happening probably connected with the experience of the previous day. I asked him if he wanted to come with me. He did, and invited a child named Beni with him. On our way to the playroom he told me that he wanted to play the same game but wanted Beni to be with him in his mother's belly. He also wanted me to be his mother.

In the Playroom

Dani told Beni to lie down near him in a foetal pose. I wanted Dani to give the instructions but he told me to.

I began to tell the story of the creation in mother's body, their arrival into the womb and being tied by the umbilical cord. I asked how they felt there.

Dani said, 'Not good'.

He thought for a minute and then his eyes lit up and he asked for the doll called Beni. He got down from the bed and a scene of anger, similar to that of yesterday was repeated.

The boy Beni was petrified hearing Dani shouting.

Following this final outburst Dani jumped back onto the bed, embraced Beni and said tenderly,

'Now we are ready to be born'.

The child was very happy as a result of his corrected reconstruction of his traumatic experience and the corrective impact on him. The experience seemed to change him very much and his relationships with his mother and peers improved.

This work is not just birthwork or regression therapy but shows how it may be integrated into child therapy to allow behaviour change at an early age, even pre-school age.

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