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Juvenile sexual addiction, alcohol abuse and strategic counseling: A case study

Dr. Valeria Saladino, Department of Human, Social and Health Sciences, University of Cassino and Southern Lazio, Italy

Dr. Nadia Barberis, Department of Health Sciences, Magna Graecia University of Catanzaro, Italy

Dr. Maria Pisano, Department of Health Sciences, Magna Graecia University of Catanzaro, Italy

Dr. Martina Tallarico, Department of Health Sciences, Magna Graecia University of Catanzaro, Italy

Prof. Valeria Verrastro, Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, Magna Graecia University of Catanzaro, Italy

Abstract:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), children and adolescents are often victims of sexual abuse and harassment in both, within the family system and non-family contexts.
Mostly, girls and children <18 have been victims of violence and sexual exploitation during their childhood. Indeed, seems that females are more likely to be a victim of abuse and violence than males (20% vs. 5–10%).
Abuses and violence negatively impact on victims' lives, becoming traumas and leading to long-term psychophysical and relational consequences, such as substance and behavioral addictions, self-harm, suicide, anxiety and depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, victims, especially adolescents, are often afraid of asking for support from parents and professionals and they try to cope difficulties on their own.
In this frame, strategic counseling could be a useful therapeutic tool to structure an alliance with victims and help them to solve their psychological issues.
Strategic counseling in treatment of behavioral and substance addictions aims to facilitate changing stimulating people awareness and strengths.
The patient is not identified as the problem but as a person whit a problem.
Strategic counseling is based on the principles of strategic psychotherapy and can be used in several fields and contexts.
Strategic counseling starts from the assumption that the person wants to make a change in his life. At personal level counseling improves self-knowledge in people and the use of their strengths in all life context. Regarding behavioral addictions, the strategic counseling can increase awareness of these behaviors by establishing a relationship between counselor and patient. Strategic counseling uses specific techniques to promote change in people, starting with their own self-awareness.
The therapeutic alliance with the counselor guarantees the reduction of the symptoms in short time.
Strategic counseling involves specific stages of change, from refusing the problematic condition to develop awareness about coping and problem-solving skills. The counselor and the patient succeed, through the relationship, to create a cooperative environment to break the vicious circle and to create a virtuous circle that is intended to promote a constructive change in the patient through work based on the present and the future.
In this case study we report the story of a 17-year-old adolescent who has a sexual trauma associated to sexual violence in childhood, a BDSM-type sexual addiction (slavery and discipline, domination and submission, sadism and masochism), self-aggressive conduct, and alcohol abuse.
The adolescent had been a victim of sexual violence at the age of 6 and she had never talked about the rape with anyone. Furthermore, she has a negative relationship with her mother, who assumed a role of control of her daughter' behaviors, creating distancing and distrust.

At the age of 12, the adolescent began to experience social anxiety, and a feeling of shame. Therefore, she used alcohol and bondage in sexual relationships, as coping strategies.
The strategic counseling was structured in 15 sessions based on problem-solving techniques and corrective behavioral strategies. The patient elaborated her traumatic experience, becoming more aware of her resources and her desires, and she learned to manage the sense of guilt and shame associated with the violence suffered. Also, the adolescent structured her identity, interrupting in using dysfunctional strategy, such as hyper-sexuality and alcohol.

Importance of Research:
The discussed topic in our contribution is very important as it emerges a therapeutic path structured in phases and which uses specific intervention strategies that have led to an effective path, to a reduction of symptoms and discomfort in the patient. The issue of sexual abuse and sexual violence in minors is current and widespread in Italy, as well as in other countries. Specifically, our work shows a possible and less usual consequence of sexual trauma in childhood: sexual addiction of the BDSM-type, (slavery and discipline, domination and submission, sadism and masochism), associated with the use of alcoholic substances and the sensation-seeking related to violent relationships. The illustrated therapeutic path could build the foundations for a broader research project on the topic and therefore be a suggestion or hypothesis for future scientific research, as well as offer useful reflections to professionals working on sexual trauma and addictions in adolescence. Furthermore, strategic counseling can be considered a useful and practical tool in solving problems associated with addictions, since it focuses on the person's resources and not on the problem.



Biography:
Clinical psychologist, specializing in criminology, juridical psychology, and forensic science.
PhD in Developmental Psychology and and Post Doc in Clinical Psychology at the University of Cassino and Southernn Lazio. She is interested in new addictions, sexual offending, and the use of new technologies in the field of treatment and she published articles and books on the topic.
She works in University Mercatorum of Rome, and University “Dante Alighieri” of Reggio Calabria, as a professor and collaborates with University of Salerno and “Magna Graecia” University of Catanzaro.
Also, she works in adults Italian Correctional Facilities as a psychologist.

Institute Information:

The University of Cassino and Southern Lazio is an Italian public research university located in Cassino, Italy. It was established in 1979. The University of Cassino and Southern Lazio comprises faculties in the fields of economics, engineering, humanities (literature and philosophy), law and human movement sciences.

Institute Photograph:



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