

An Angry little girl who wants to love her mother.

A case of cumulative relationship trauma with a sporadically depressed mother

Reason for referral: a 6 ½ year old child. This little girl's mother describes her daughter in this way: "Living with Maia is like living in Hell". The child's behavior is erratic, she is displaying extreme hyperactivity. Can't stand the word "no". There are many Temper tantrums, difficulty concentrating in school, extremes of emotion between anger and over excited happiness. She also has many fears.

Background: Family – Parents, an older son from the father's first marriage, The older son is described as "difficult", seems to have serious behavior problems and is often threatening to the little girl. Mother suffered from long term depression. After the birth, she did not bond with the baby; left her to the care of her grandmother, for most of the first year. Her pattern has been one of good functioning when she responds appropriately and lovingly, alternating with periods when the medication seems to stop being effective and she lapses again into depression and inability to cope. She admits to having hit her daughter (spanking) when she "can't take it anymore". For the last two years, mother has functioned well and is trying hard to repair her relationship with her daughter.

The child developed normally, but evidenced hyperactivity and extreme anger reactions from an early age.

Resources: Strong motivation on the part of both mother and daughter to "love each other". An intelligent child with who loves to play and dance and "put on shows". Social development is appropriate though she tends to get into fights.

In the therapy room: Both mother and child are eager to play and interact with each other. They respond to suggestion, although there is a sense of tension, of their trying too hard. Their hugs have a sense of urgency. The little girl's behavior quickly jumps to anger.