

A Confused Little Girl Who Needs to Tell Her Story.

A case of Complex Trauma in a Child Living in an Atmosphere of Violence

Presenting problem –3 year old girl with speech delay, whose mother feels that she can't understand her both functionally and emotionally and can't seem to calm her when she's upset. She cries very easily, has temper tantrums when her mother doesn't understand her, is destructive and often seems to "be in another place". The child cannot bear seeing her mother sad. She is over demanding and over controlling.

Background: Father is currently in prison, awaiting trial, in a charge of brutally attacking the mother. Mother and her two daughters are coping with the loss of the family and their separation from the two older sons of the father who were living with them. The family had for many years been living under threat of the alcoholic father's violence. The child had confused loyalties. She was both scared of the father and attached to him. When she cried, father would threaten to beat the mother if she didn't make the child be quiet.

The family came to therapy two month after the father was sent to jail. The mother was coping, but often felt helpless and panicked. She said that her daughter had become distant from her and unmanageable in her behavior. The kindergarten teacher reported that the child prefers being alone and often seem to be in "another state of awareness".

Resources: The mother described their attachment as a good one in spite of the fact that she, the mother, has been living under the terror of the alcoholic father. The little girl had often been loved by the father and her three elderly siblings. There was a warm connection amongst the siblings.

The child loves drawing, singing and playing with her dolls.