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## FAIRY-TALE THERAPY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL METHOD IN WORKING WITH SOCIALLY EXCLUDED YOUTH, PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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*The widespread use of fairy-tale materials in the educational process and psychocorrectional work stems from the imperatives of the new post-non-classical scientific paradigm, which is implemented in uniting the scientific and mythological worldviews, when, on the one hand, there is a need for theoretical interpretation of mythological ideas of humanity, and on the other hand, there is a need for using the mythological knowledge and metaphorical forms of their representation in scientific searches. Under such conditions, the fairy-tale-metaphorical resource of human development finds actualization in modern psychological and pedagogical science, which studies the peculiarities of children's perception and understanding of fairy-tale content, which is considered as a means of upbringing, a special source of the formation of aesthetic feelings as well as a psychotherapeutic tool for solving many problems of children with special educational needs and the socially excluded youth.*

*Accordingly, the article outlines the main aspects of the fairy-tale not only as a developmental and educational, but also as a correctional and psychotherapeutic means of influencing children and youth.*

*It has been shown that the therapeutic effect of fairy-tale material largely stems from the effects of functional asymmetry of the hemispheres of the human brain when the right hemisphere functions mainly at the level of unconscious mental mechanisms. Thus, many problems of children with special educational needs and socially excluded youth are connected with the activity of these mental mechanisms and, at the psychotherapeutic level, acquire the status of psychiatric problems associated with fundamental psychotherapeutic phenomenon – the failure to react with the appropriate emotion to positive or negative events. Fairy tales and psychotherapeutic stories appeal to the right-hemisphere aspect of the psyche of children and youth, which realizes their psychotherapeutic effect, bringing many problems to the surface of the conscious activity of the psyche.*

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**Keywords:** *fairy-tale, educational resource of a fairy-tale, fairy-tale as a means of upbringing, therapeutic resource of a fairy tale, concept of functional asymmetry of the cerebral hemispheres, diplasty, children with special educational needs, the socially excluded youth.*

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## КАЗКОТЕРАПІЯ ЯК ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНИЙ МЕТОД У РОБОТІ З СОЦІАЛЬНО ВИКЛЮЧЕНОЮ МОЛОДДЮ, УЧНЯМИ З ОСОБЛИВИМИ ПОТРЕБАМИ

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*Широке застосування казкових матеріалів в освітньому процесі впливає із імперативів нової постнекласичної наукової парадигми, що реалізується у поєднанні наукового та міфологічного світорозуміння, коли, з одного боку, виявляється необхідність у теоретичній інтерпретації міфологічних уявлень людства, а з іншого, – використання у наукових пошуках міфологічних знань та метафоричних форм їх репрезентації. За таких умов, казково-метафоричний ресурс розвитку людини знаходить актуалізацію у сучасній психолого-педагогічній науці, що вивчає особливості сприйняття і розуміння дітьми казкового змісту, який розглядається як засіб виховання, особливе джерело формування естетичних почуттів, а також як психотерапевтичний інструмент для вирішення багатьох проблем дітей з особливими освітніми потребами та соціально ізольованої молоді.*

*Відповідно у статті окреслюються головні аспекти казки не тільки як розвивально-виховного, але й корекційно-терапевтичного засобу впливу на дітей і молодь.*

*Показано, що терапевтична дія казкового матеріалу значною мірою зумовлена ефектами функціональної асиметрії півкуль головного мозку людини, коли права півкуля функціонує переважно на рівні неусвідомлених психічних механізмів. Таким чином, багато проблем дітей з особливими освітніми потребами та соціально ізольованої молоді пов'язані з діяльністю цих психічних механізмів і на психотерапевтичному рівні набувають статусу психіатричних проблем, пов'язаних із фундаментальним психотерапевтичним феноменом – невідреагуванням як неспроможністю відповідної емоції реагувати на позитивні чи негативні події. Казки та психотерапевтичні оповідання звертаються до правопівкульної сторони психіки дітей та молоді, яка реалізує їх психотерапевтичний ефект, виводячи багато проблем на поверхню свідомої діяльності психіки.*

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**Ключові слова:** чарівна казка, казка як засіб виховання, терапевтичний ресурс казки, концепція функціональної асиметрії півкуль головного мозку, дипластія, діти з особливими освітніми потребами, соціально ізольована молодь.

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**Introduction of the issue.** In today's complex socio-economic conditions, the issue of comprehensive education and development of the human personality as the highest value of society is particularly acute. In this context, one should not underestimate the importance of beauty and harmony, that is, the aesthetic qualities of organizing people's lives and livelihoods. Modern scientists distinguish the spiritual and sanogenic function of beauty: this means that beauty can help preserve and maintain the health of a person and society. At the same time, the number of young people with special educational needs who require psychological and pedagogical assistance at a high professional level is growing [6]. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find new ways of working with people with special educational needs, which include socially excluded youth.

The first attempts to explain the essence of the concept of "social

exclusion" are associated with the 40s of the twentieth century. The term itself appeared in French sociology in the 1960s. In Ukraine, in 2002, within the framework of poverty research this term and the phenomena it reflects became the object of scientific research.

Social exclusion is interpreted as the removal of individuals or social groups from the social structure of society and social processes, the creation of conditions that do not allow these individuals or groups to play a significant role in society; a socially excluded person is an object of social work who, due to economic, political, religious, social, psychological and medical barriers, has completely or partially lost ties with society (A. Savitskaya [9]).

The definition of the concept of social exclusion, the analysis of its forms and causes, the grounding of various methodological approaches to the study of social exclusion are contained in the

works of many scientists – both Ukrainian and foreign [7-9; 12; 21; 23; 26], who study such aspects as the problem of unequal access to education, inequality (regarding remuneration) in the professional/labor sphere, the process of destruction of social ties, the factors and mechanisms that prevent social polarization.

It should be noted that psychocorrection in working with socially excluded youth presupposes certain ways of using art therapeutic forms, methods and techniques in pedagogical practice. A unique method of solving these problems is the method of fairy tale therapy [5].

**Current state of the issue.** Under such conditions, the fairy-tale-metaphorical resource of human development is extremely actual in modern psychological and pedagogical science, which studies the peculiarities of children's perception and understanding of fairy-tale content, which is considered as a means of upbringing, a special source of formation of aesthetic feelings. A significant number of scientific papers are devoted to the methodology of studying fairy tales. Modern authors study the influence of fairy tales on children's speech development, as well as they use fairy-tales in speech therapy work, psychocorrectional work, in studying the peculiarities of fairy tales' influencing the mental sphere of the preschooler's personality [3]. The study of folk art, in particular fairy tales, is associated with the famous names of Ukrainian researchers – O. Potebnia, M. Dragomanov, M. Sumtsov, I. Manzhura, I. Franko, I. Rudchenko, V. Hnatyuk and others. Many researchers have used the fairy-tales as a means of upbringing. Among them are the classics of pedagogy and modern teacher-methodologists:

K. Ushinsky, V. Sukhomlynsky, M. Stelmakhovich, S. Rusova, I. Bekh, A. Bogush and others [11]. The fairy-tale as a means of development and upbringing of children is widely used in Ukraine [2; 4; 6; 10] and abroad [13; 16; 22; 24; 29].

The fairy-tale is considered to be not only a developmental and upbringing, but also an effective correctional and therapeutic tool [1; 14; 15; 17; 18; 20; 27; 28].

**Aim of the research.** Accordingly, the purpose of the article is to outline the main aspects of the fairy-tale as not only a developmental, upbringing, but as correctional, and therapeutic means of influencing children and youth with special educational needs, the socially excluded youth.

**Research methods.** Among the methods used in the interdisciplinary study were not only the methods of theoretical analysis of the problem field, but also the applied tools have been used – the concept of functional asymmetry of the human cerebral hemispheres, as well as the therapeutic tools for the use of art technologies in the process of correcting the mental profile of children.

#### **Results and discussion.**

##### ***Historical background of the phenomenon of a fairy-tale***

In a historical context, we can talk about using a fairy-tale as an access code not only to the cultural and historical background of humanity, but also to a person's emotional mechanisms concerning mastering social reality, which can be illustrated by the "law of emotional reality of fantasy", which indicates that any emotion caused by both real and unreal events/objects is real. Thus, despite the events that occur in a fairy-tale, the basis of its influence on the child is a real emotion (L. Vygotsky) [5].

An important stage in the development of the teaching about fairy-tales, myths in the psychological aspect are connected with the works of S. Freud, K.-G. Jung and their followers. One of the first to discover and study the symbolic nature of a fairy-tale was S. Freud. According to him, fairy-tales and myths, as well as dreams, are the result of neurotic symptoms, a person's attempts to get rid of the tension that arises in the case of limiting his/her desire to satisfy own needs. The scientist noted that the prerogative of reading fairy-tales belongs to the child, while an adult must understand the negative effect by perceiving fairy-tales, which are an illusion that can only cause regression and fear. A different opinion was held by

C.-G. Jung, who believed that since fairy-tales reflect the problems of the being at all stages of the development of human society, their analysis makes it possible to explore the anatomy of the human psyche, the basic components of which are archetypes. Valuable for us is the statement that it is in myths and fairy-tales, as well as in dreams, that the human soul tells its own story.

So, from the point of view of Jungian analytical psychology, everything that happens in a fairy-tale is an intrapersonal psychological process, in which all elements (heroes, objects, events) represent different aspects of the personality. Heroes of fairy-tales in this case are often the embodiment of archetypes, and the psychological interpretation of a fairy tale consists in considering all fairy-tale characters, events, places and symbols as internal unconscious feelings, impulses, experiences and aspirations of a person.

In general, we can talk about a large number of scientists, including educationalists, who have devoted their research to the fairy-tale as the basis of a symbolic and mythological reflection of reality by a person and humanity in general.

One of the first to revive the professional interest of teachers in the fairy-tale was Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, who paid considerable attention to the use of the fairy-tale in working with children. V. Sukhomlynsky's "School of Joy" is well known, in which the Fairy-Tale Room, the Island of Wonders, the Corner of Dreams and the Magical School under the Blue Sky successfully operated, where new pedagogical ideas were born and implemented.

A feature of the use of fairy-tales in the educational system of the outstanding pedagogue is its harmonious and natural use in the process of daily teaching and upbringing of pupils. At the same time, according to V. Sukhomlynsky, a fairy-tale is an active creative process that covers all spheres of the child's spiritual life.

In general, the research of many scientists formed the basis of modern

effective methods of diagnosis, correction and development of personality using fairy-tales.

### ***Upbringing resources of fairy-tales***

As Vasyl Sukhomlynsky wrote, "a fairy-tale is a seed from which a child's emotional assessment of life phenomena grows" [11]. A fairy-tale is primarily used in the educational process as a means of developing child's personality and cultivating certain social/universal values that are formed in a child at the level of socio-psychological attitudes and settings.

With the help of a fairy-tale, the vocabulary is expanded, the child's thinking and speech are developed. The child learns to ask questions, answer them, build a phrase, a sentence, and later – a whole dialogue. Thus, through a fairy-tale, a child develops in comprehending the language. When reading a fairy-tale, one can find sayings and proverbs that help to understand the meaning of a fairy-tale and develop child's ability to perceive the polysemy of a word, its deep character.

In addition, fairy-tales provide a child with a positive upbringing influence, prepare to distinguish between courage and cowardice, truth and lies, intelligence and stupidity. Thus, the intrinsic value of fairy-tales lies in their impact on the multifaceted development of personality. The texts instill in a child the confidence in the triumph of truth, the victory of good over evil. Temporary failures of positive fairy-tale's characters are the norm, and after that, as a rule, the joy comes as a result of common efforts of positive fairy-tale's characters.

The developmental and upbringing functions of fairy-tales can be focused on several aspects.

1. The child's personal participation in fairy-tale events, when the characters and events unfold around the child's life, interests and personality.

2. An individual approach, when personalized fairy-tales can be developed to teach the child certain patterns of action in the real world, when, for example, if the child refuses to eat vegetables, the story can include

explanations of the benefits of vegetables, emphasizing how important they are for growing strong and healthy.

3. Emotional correction of behavior, when fairy-tales can solve child's specific psycho-emotional problems.

4. Fairy-tales act as an incentive for independent reading, which improves the child's language skills.

5. Fairy-tales can be the means of developing the child's creativity and imagination, when the fairy-tale acts as a means of improving writing and storytelling skills.

6. Fairy-tales can convey certain moral messages and values that are important to the child, which helps to form its strong ethical foundation.

7. The socializing potential of fairy-tales is important, when fairy-tales can create emotional ties between children and adults. This can be especially valuable for teachers, parents, or mentors who want to establish a deeper emotional connection with children including the children with special educational needs.

8. Fairy-tales can be the means to develop a child's critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

9. Fairy-tales serve to enhance a child's self-esteem, when the child can perceive itself as a hero or heroine, which can increase a child's self-esteem and self-confidence, encouraging to overcome real-life challenges [5; 30].

### ***Therapeutic/psychocorrectional aspects of fairy-tales***

Fairy-tale therapy is one of the varieties of art therapy, which involves high-quality professional training of specialists in the field of special and inclusive education. The use of fairy-tale therapy allows one to directly influence the emotional and sensory sphere of the personality, change behavior patterns, and actualize hidden resource capacities in difficult life situations. The effectiveness of using the fairy-tale therapy methods involves mastering it at a professional level, which requires the training of qualified teachers who are able to assist the personality in its formation, development, and self-realization, effectively interact with the client in order to provide him/her with

assistance, promptly respond to the client's requests, and improve their qualifications in conditions of rapid socio-economic changes.

In this context we can mention the workshop *"Fairytale Therapy: Advanced Course"* [5] that provides for in-depth mastery of fairy-tale therapy in the following extremely important and relevant areas:

1) Stages of immersion in working with a fairy-tale. Creating a fairy-tale playing environment for children.

2) "Special effects" that help enhance the healing power of a fairy-tale; performing diagnostics using the fairy-tale therapy methods.

3) The "Hero's Path" technique.

4) Features of a fairy-tale for working with psychosomatic diseases.

5) Fairy-tale therapy as a way to create the children's intention to recover.

6) A fairy-tale as a means of correcting undesirable behavior in children.

7) Features of writing a fairy-tale for working with stress and fears.

8) A fairy-tale as a tool for working with loneliness.

9) Methods of fairy-tale therapy in working with the issue of self-sabotage.

10) Working with texts in the process of psychotherapy and psychocorrection of crisis states.

11) Using ready-made fairy-tales and the specifics of writing corrective and therapeutic fairy-tales for children and youth in a situation of grief.

12) Psychocorrectional fairy-tales for working with child-parent relationships; fairy-tales for finding solutions.

13) A fairy-tale as a way of modeling the future (for forming changes in life or getting out of a difficult situation).

14) Fairy-tale therapy as an opportunity for self-identification (in the profession, preferences, desires, etc.).

Thus, the methods of socio-pedagogical correction presupposing using fairy-tales as an art-technological tool is considered the most successful and effective when working with children's emotional and behavioral disorders. Fairy-tales enable the child to overcome its fears, anxiety, as well as to correct negative traits. Fairy-

tales also help children learn generally accepted moral and ethical norms and teach socially acceptable ways to express their own emotions [1].

Therapeutic fairy tales can be differentiated due to the following issues: "1) Fairy tales for fearful children; 2) Fairy tales for aggressive children; 3) Fairy tales for hyperactive children; 4) Fairy tales focused on the settlement of family relations (for example, parental divorce, etc.); 5) Fairy tales focused on coping with difficulties in socialization; 6) Fairy tales aimed at preventing neurotic disorders; 7) Fairy tales aimed at supporting a child facing death; 8) Fairy tale aimed at solving problems with self-esteem; 9) Fairy tales for children of war" [18; 27].

The appeal of fairy tales for the correction of fears and anxiety, lies, first of all, in the naturalness and genuine character of the plot line. In a figurative form, the child can experience the problems that all humanity has gone through (separation from parents, the problem of choice, injustice, etc.). The most important thing is that in a fairy-tale, evil is always punished, but even from bad deeds one can learn a good lesson [20; 28].

There are several methods of working with a fairy-tale: telling, rewriting, composing new fairy-tales, their analyzing, role-playing, drawing or making characters on their basis.

Children, as a rule, cannot talk about their fears that underlie anxiety. In the process of discussing a fairy-tale and working with it through drawing or making characters, while reviving their fear and playing with it, the child unconsciously understands that it can manage its fear itself. The child can be proposed to compose a story about its fear thus acting the fear out. After this the "fear" dolls or "fear" drawings can be destroyed. However, there are situations when the child has become friends with its doll, and the child does not want to part with the doll. Usually, this means that the original fear that formed the anxiety no longer scares the child.

Fairy-tales being an art technology for correcting anxiety, fears, and self-doubt

are also used in working with adults being the important factors for the correction of children's psychic problems. A fairy-tale can create a special, magical atmosphere thus calming and setting child's mood for the positive victorious behavior, helping fight fears and other problems. Thanks to this, children reveal their potential personality, they feel protected, confident, and comfortable.

Each "magical" fairy-tale is heterogeneous and consists of several interconnected parts.

The first part – the beginning of the fairy-tale – introduces the listeners to the plot, the main theme, and prepares them for further events. This is an introductory part revealing the main problem highlighted in the fairy-tale and preparing the listener to answer what the listener can learn from this fairy-tale and what it can teach.

The main part – the development of the plot – plays a practical role. It reflects the position of the protagonist. It fully reveals:

1) problems that the fairy-tale's protagonist has to solve;

2) a means (most often it is a fairy-tale assistant) that helps the protagonist of the fairy-tale to cope with the difficulties that arise, and achieve the goal;

3) the attitude of the protagonist to himself/herself, his/her self-esteem; attitude to the world and to those fairy-tale's characters who surround the main character.

From this part of the fairy-tales it is very important to draw a conclusion, to understand and realize the main problems and difficulties of the protagonist, the mistakes he/she made, so that, when dealing with similar situations in real life, if possible, not to make the same mistakes. In children who are just starting to learn life, understanding these problems occurs more at a subconscious level, while in adults it is mostly conscious.

The final component of each fairy-tale is the resolution of the problem/conflict arising in the second part. In it, the protagonist overcomes all difficulties, is rewarded by fate for the good he/she has created, and evil, which is necessarily

present in every fairy-tale, turns out to be defeated and punished [15; 17].

Thus, the end of the fairy-tale is the most important.

At large, each fairy-tale is a set of structural elements that help to implement its main functions and achieve the set goal. When working with fairy-tales, it is possible to use various forms of presenting the material (telling and composing the fairy-tale, drawing and modeling its characters, using image therapy as well as presenting fairy tales using different social roles, etc.), that is, it is important to use fairy-tale tools in a harmonious complex [14].

In acting out scenes from a fairy-tale, which are often loved by younger children, the participants tend to identify themselves with various characters of fairy-tales thus reincarnate these characters in a magical environment of the fairy-tale. The teacher can use a number of accessories (cloaks, crowns, hats, toy swords, baskets, scarves, fans, jewelry, fabrics, etc.) so that children, while dressing in front of a mirror, "assemble" the necessary images. By changing the image, the teacher can change the character, behavior and communication style of the training participants, encourage them to overcome their own fears, anxiety, and negative attitudes [19].

In this context, we can cite many fairy-tales (psychotherapeutic stories) that tell of events indirectly alleviating many children's problems, for example *the problem of enuresis* which make children to be excluded persons (refer to *The Story of the Baby Elephant on Fire* [25]).

**Conclusions and research perspectives.** 1. The fairy-tale is analyzed not only as a developmental, educational but also as a correctional and therapeutic tool for children with special educational needs and for the excluded youth.

2. The therapeutic effect of fairy-tale material largely stems from the concept of functional asymmetry of the hemispheres of the human brain. The right hemisphere is responsible for the direct figurative-metaphorical, emotional-expressive

perception of reality by a person of the external world, when this perception is realized mainly at the level of unconscious mental mechanisms [3]. Accordingly, many problems of children with special educational needs and the excluded youth in this case, are closely connected with the activity of these mental mechanisms and, at the psychotherapeutic level, acquire the status of psychiatric problems associated with fundamental psychotherapeutic phenomenon – *the failure to react* with the appropriate emotion to positive or negative events (failure to react adequately to social interactions may appear as disregard for other people's feelings and behavior thus developing in persons the distorted picture of the world), with the inability of a person to realize and express these problems. Fairy-tales (psychotherapeutic stories) appeal specifically to the right-hemisphere aspect of the psyche of children and young people, which realizes their psychotherapeutic effect, bringing many problems to the surface of the conscious activity of the psyche.

3. On the other hand, fairy-tale material can express a paradoxical-mystical, miraculous aspect of reality, realizing a paradoxical-polysemantic, creative context of mental activity, enabling the children with special educational needs and the excluded youth to solve many life problems that arise from the inability to connect opposite mental states (refer to phenomenon of "*the cognitive dissonance*"). But it is precisely the process of such a unification that constitutes the fundamental ability of a person as a representative of *Homo sapiens – diplasty* – the ability to integrate in one behavioral/mental context opposite and mutually exclusive images, objects, thoughts, states.

The perspectives of the study are related to the need to research the psychotherapeutic effect of paradoxical content of fairy-tale material on correction of problematic conditions of children with special educational needs and the excluded youth.

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