

MIFGASH

JOURNAL OF
SOCIAL-EDUCATIONAL WORK

Special Issue

Early Childhood Memories:
Formative Narratives in the Dialogue between
Theory, Therapy and Application

Guest-Editor: Dr. Amitai Hamenachem

Vol. 25, no. 45–46 • June–December 2017

Published by:



EFSHAR – The Association for the Development
of Social & Educational Services

In cooperation with:



Ministry of Social Affairs
Division of Correctional Services

EFSHAR – The Association for the Development of
Social & Educational Services

The Israeli Branch of AIEJI – International Association of
Social Educators

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ISSN 0792-6820
Jerusalem 2017

Annual subscription fee: 80 NIS
Price for a single copy: 40 NIS

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ABSTRACTS

Early childhood memories: A comparative theoretical perspective – Uses and applications

Amitai Hamenachem, Psy.D., Clinical psychologist senior lecturer, Beit Berl Academic College, Israel

In this article we compare four theories that deal with explanation, comprehension and intervention by means of early childhood memories: the classical psychoanalytic theory, the Adlerian approach, the current psychodynamic approach and the narrative viewpoint. In the overview we discuss the dispute about childhood memories as truth or as narrative and attempt to bridge between the understanding of the psychodynamic approach and that of the cognitive approach. The article expands on the diverse and rich description of the uses and applications of childhood memories in psychodiagnosis, in dynamic and cognitive psychotherapy, in couples, family and group therapy, and in organizational development, as well as a forceful unique tool in expression and creativity therapy, such as music, art and movement therapy. The goal of the article is to acquaint professional personnel with the use of childhood memories as an intimate, divulging and enlightening unique tool, which is recognized and taught, though much less in professional therapeutic training.

Key words: early childhood memories, screen memory, lifestyle, narrative

“The past moves within the present”: Adler’s narrative approach to early recollections

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Various therapeutic methods consider early recollections to be coveted golden nuggets, but each offers a different account of their essence and function. The purpose of this paper is to analyze Alfred Adler’s theory of early recollections, and suggest that although he developed it decades prior to the advance of narrative theory – it is in essence a full-fledged narrative conceptualization. Eight characteristics of early recollections as a narrative metaphor are discussed: (a) goal-directedness; (b) representational quality; (c) subjectivity; (d) selectivity; (e) relevance: past–present–future connection; (f) lack of truth validity; (g) autobiographical nature and (h) homeostatic role. These claims are explained and demonstrated using several of Adler’s own early recollections and are juxtaposed with present day equivalent views on narrative. In conclusion, in light of the metaphorical-narrative conception of early recollections in Adler’s Individual Psychology, their chief function as a psychological goal-preserver and life-directing navigator are highlighted.

Key words: early recollections, childhood memories, Adler, Individual Psychology, Adlerian Psychology, narrative, life style

Childhood memories – From nightmare to story

Michal Simchon, Ph.D., Head of the Bibliotherapy Graduate Program, David Yellin Academic College of Education, Israel

The paper describes the effect of childhood memories on the author’s life, as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. The first memory is a nightmare and the second a story. The paper is based on the narrative premise that one’s personality is shaped not by reality but rather by how one relates to reality, and hence gives it meaning. In the current case – the nightmare was unavoidable but the story was shaped by the narrator, a Holocaust survivor, who chose a special way of weaving his life events and transforming them into a story that could remedy the nightmare. The paper illustrates the story’s therapeutic qualities, rendering it a powerful curative engine for both narrator and listeners. The paper analyzes the spontaneously related story along the principles of narrative therapy, associated as they are with processing grief and trauma, and thus demonstrates the power of the healing story.

Key words: narrative therapy, second generation, radioactive transference, processing grief, treating trauma, preferred story

Individual psychotherapy and old age: The importance of early recollections

Ayala Eliyahou, Ph.D., Clinical social worker, Adlerian psychotherapist; School of Social Work, Bar-Ilan University and Adler Institute, Israel

The core of individual psychotherapy is the analysis of early recollections, which enables a person to reveal his/her strengths, identify his/her potential and creativity and ultimately encourages him/her to utilize his capabilities to improve his/her quality of life. The purpose of the article is to point out the benefits of incorporating early recollections into the therapy of elderly patients. The article introduces the theory and basics of individual psychotherapy, the therapy structure and methods, and shows the special use of early recollections in this method.

The article presents a clinical case from a treatment room, in which an 89 year old patient shares her early recollections that eventually facilitate the analysis and diagnosis of her life-style, the strategies which help her achieve a sense of worth and belonging, treatment relations and critical landmarks within the treatment. The discussion focuses on the special significance of incorporating early recollections in light of the goals set by the individual therapy. Lastly the article emphasizes the importance, and the professional challenge therapy of elderly patients presents to every clinician.

Key words: individual psychotherapy, early recollections, elderly patients

Music therapy and childhood memories

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Human beings collect memories throughout their life. Such memories influence their identities, personalities and their ways of being and living, especially in their adulthood. Positive, negative and traumatic childhood memories have an impact on the lives of adults in conscious and unconscious ways and can act as a key to understanding relationships in the past and how they affect the present and future.

This article focuses on two subjects: music as a way to expose childhood memories and musical childhood memories. Childhood memories are personal memories that compose a collage of pictures, sounds, songs,

melodies, smells, tastes, stories and impressions that shaped our beginning years as human beings and were instilled in us throughout the years. Musical memories are memories that have to do with specific compositions, songs, musical instruments, performances and music teachers to which and whom individuals have meaningful personal connections and consequently shape their development, identities and lifestyles.

These two subjects have an important role in music therapy, especially when working with adults and the elderly. The musical experiences that occur while improvising, singing, writing songs, listening to music and musical presentation help clients connect with their creative and playful inner place, expose, deal with and process traumatic memories as well as remember positive musical events that took place in the past.

These five techniques are presented and illustrated by clinical examples.

Key words: music therapy, childhood memories, traumatic memories, musical memories

Things seen from there, cannot be seen from here: Therapeutic explorations far away from homeland, in the mother tongue, arouse childhood memories

Sarit Gideoni Cohen, Ph.D., Clinical psychologist; Head of the Assessment Center,
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Psychotherapy in the mother tongue conducted far from the patient's homeland has the potential of processing a reservoir of memories in the mother tongue, which does not always appear in psychotherapy practiced in a second language. The process of becoming familiar with the foreign country takes place by means of the mother tongue by recalling early memories created through the melody of this language and thus are less accessible in the second language. Observing these memories from a physical distance, facilitates emotional closeness, as a result of the ability to process trauma from a distance from the source of the primary event.

Gradually, an internal "bridge" is built between early memories established in the motherland and the experiences created in the new country. In this space, a transition from the mother tongue to the second language creates a new and unique language through which different perspectives can be observed in relation to past and present experiences.

Joint presence of an Israeli therapist and an Israeli patient, far from their homeland, help in adapting, as well as providing a mutual reflection on the

ability to return to the motherland, as a result of processing a traumatic memory.

Key words: language, bilingualism, mother tongue, immigration, loss, early childhood memories

Memory processes after childhood trauma: The special case of incest

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Memories of traumatic events and of incest in particular, are different in their very essence from regular memories. Traumatic memories are registered under conditions of intense physiological and emotional arousal. As a result, they cannot be integrated with other experiences, to then become regular memories. The trauma's impact and the long-term stress that ensues cause a dysfunction in the mechanisms of registration. This study addresses the particular character of traumatic memory that develops after severe and prolonged trauma. Specific focus is on the experience of incest. We outline the principles which should guide therapeutic intervention after the initial revelation of traumatic memories.

Key words: traumatic memory, sexual abuse, incest, recovered memory, dissociation, amnesia, false memory

The space where the impossible is possible: Imagination, playfulness, and creativity as a source of healing from trauma

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The objective of this study is to examine the role of imagination in the treatment of psychotrauma. Different evident-based psychotrauma

treatment protocols utilize imagination effectively, though often without theoretical references. This article provides an up-to-date literature review on the role of imagination in coping and in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). We review brain elements pertaining to imagination and PTSD where creativity is presented as a significant predictor of resilience after traumatic exposure. In our psychotrauma method (SEE FAR CBT) imagination is used through gradual introduction of playfulness and play by creating “fantastic reality”, a term coined by Lahad (2005) to describe the “space” that helps the clients to cope, control, modify and change the traumatic memory. We discuss the gap between the frequent use of imagination in therapy and the understanding of the mechanisms that bring about change as presented in the SEE FAR CBT protocol with its emphasis on the role of imagination in healing PTSD.

Key words: imagination, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), creativity, playfulness, therapy, traumatic memory

Social remembering matrix – From personal childhood memory to social memory

Amitai Hamenachem, Psy.D., Clinical psychologist senior lecturer, Beit Berl Academic College, Israel

This article examines personal memory from the social perspective and reviews social knowledge embedded in early childhood memories. First we present the memory from the personal perspective and briefly survey four different approaches that explain this memory: the psychoanalytic approach, the Adlerian approach, the current psychodynamic approach and the narrative approach. We then discuss the memory from the social perspective, while presenting a method that combines personal and social aspects of the memory. In the application section we provide innovative work, the “Social Remembering Matrix”, which, in practical terms, illustrates the combination and the link between personal memory and social memory. Several examples are provided with special emphasis on the advantage of working in a multi-cultural society. It can be proven that the two levels of memory – personal and collective – autonomously exist, and yet are closely intertwined. Namely collective memory does not exist without individuals’ memories, and the two are structured within the known and unknown social connections and cultural loyalties.

Key words: personal childhood memories, social memories, social structure, social remembering matrix

The intersubjective and social unconscious are inseparable

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Culture within the analytic group is intersubjective, and the matrix includes intense interpersonal events. The drama that takes place within the group is intersubjective, and the one that takes place in the multi-dimensional complex of society is the **social unconscious**. These two dramas are tightly bound in a bond that cannot be severed. In this article, I describe a traumatic event – which belongs to the wide social context – that occurred in the here and now of the group; an event which revived past traumas of patients and conductor alike. In the second part of the article I expand upon some aspects of my Jewish and Israeli identity. I describe some childhood memories connected to the Holocaust, and refer to the way that these memories influence my interventions in my role as a group analyst.

Key words: intersubjective, social unconscious, group analysis, binocular vision, matrix, Israeli society, Holocaust