

Movie Analysis Paper

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“Divorce is not only a relatively common reality for some families; it can also be a source of tremendous grief and family disorganization” (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2015) When a divorce takes

place within a family it affects the entire system. Divorce provides a solution for a couple while posing a potential influence on the mental health of their children. Children are not able to fully comprehend the reasoning why their parents cannot remain together. A divorce involves emotional detachment amongst the couple and a restructuring of marital and parental roles. The couple as well as the children experience pain due to the separation.

The movie *Mrs. Doubt Fire* is a classic example of a nuclear family that is undergoing a transformation within their family system. In this movie the family is going through a divorce and each member clearly has been affected by it in different ways. From the teen who feels the divorce has transpired because of him. The oldest daughter is showing signs through her rude behavior towards Mrs. Doubt Fire. Lastly the youngest child has false hopes that the father will go back with her mom someday. All these feelings need to be processed as a family. As well as the father who thinks there may be a chance to be with his spouse once again. All these feelings are normal for a family that is going through a divorce process.

Divorce can be considered a form of grief because there is a loss of someone. Bowlby approached grief from an attachment-separation perspective. For example, according to Bowlby (Bowlby, 1969; Jacobs, 2016), early attachments are pivotal to growth. People learn to depend on attachments that provide security and survival. When people lose attachments, or when these attachments are intermittently reinforced, this triggers feelings of anxiety and anger. (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2015) According to Bowlby there are four phases of mourning they are numbing, yearning, and searching, disorganization, and reorganization.

The first stage is called the numbing stage, and this involves feeling bewilderment and disbelief. In the movie the children as well as their father are going through this state of disbelief. The father stays at his brother's house and tells his brother that this will be momentary and that his wife will have him go back. In this stage the person has a range of emotions. The children in the movie experienced this when they walked their father out of the house. This family can benefit from this therapy because they are experiencing a range of emotions related to detachments. It will be helpful for the family to process together how they are being affected by this change that has occurred.

The second stage is yearning and searching for deep feelings of anger and pain. Search for someone or something to be responsible for their loss. It is at this stage that one is looking for who can be responsible for what has happened. In the movie the son feels he is at fault for the divorce. He believes this because of the party the father threw for him. His father reassures him that the divorce was bound to happen and that it had nothing to do with him.

The third stage is disorganization where the person accepts the reality of the loss. Begin to look at what life looks like without a significant loss. In this phase the father begins to look at what life will be like without his spouse. As well as children looking at what life looks like without both parents living together.

Fourth stage is Reorganization- Move forward to see that there is life after the divorce. The father in the movie has a consistent job and his apartment is a lot organized. He gets a promotion at work. The children's mother decides that the children are miserable without the father, and she decides to allow the father have more visitation rights.

“Divorce has become an intrinsic part of the family system.” (Fruestenber,1990)

Although divorce has become a natural part amongst families it was not the way families were intended to be. Given this fact intervention is important so that the family can get through this journey in a healthy way. The interventions that I can recommend is family therapy and parental education. Divorce is a difficult time for the whole family. Due to the transformation of the family, it would be important for the family to continue therapy. In therapy the children as well as parents can process their emotions as it relates to divorce. Also, it would be important for parents to receive parental education as they move forward in this new process in their lives.

Parenting looks different when it involves a single parent. Parents need to become aware of parental alienation. Parents may think it is ok to talk unjustly about the spouse in front of the children. Engaging in this behavior in front of children is unhealthy. The dangers of this are damaging the child's relationship with parent where child's emotions turn against parent. Parental education can help the parents become aware of things they may be doing that is not done with malicious intent.” However, if left unresolved can lead to further damage to the family system. Children are caught in between parents in the divorce process. Feels of frustration arise from the parents as well as the children. Parents need to be made aware of this. An example of this is in the movie the father is frustrated that spouse is coming early on his day to visit with children. He yells in front of the children and apologizes. Children feel tension.

The family dynamic that I observed seemed healthy amongst each member. The parent child relationship is strong with the children's father. Before the divorce the father read bedtime

stories and has a handshake with son. He mentioned to the judge that he loves his children and has never been separated from them. The relationship between mother to children is more of a disciplinary. The children love their mom as well and respect her. The siblings have a good relationship amongst each other as well. The children have an emotional attachment to their father. Who does not have custody of the children. "Fathers rarely get custody and although many divorced fathers remain involved in the lives of the children, this involvement will typically be less intensive than it was before the divorce. "(Kalmijn, 2013) Due to the father not having custody the children cannot see their father as much and through their behavior are displaying the affects this is having on them.

The oldest daughter is upset that parents are divorcing. She is acting like her mother by telling her father you are not working hard enough so we can see you more. In this behavior we can see sibling positioning where the oldest is taking the role of her mother. When the housekeeper known as Mrs. Doubtfire arrives on the scene, she is not taken well with it because she wants her father. She is frustrated by the fact that her father can no longer be with them. She then apologies to Mrs. Doubt fire for her treatment towards her and describes it as "being messed up by everything." "The divorce of parents is a major stressful life event for children and adolescents, often having negative effects on health and well-being."(Mechanic & Hansell, 1989) The second oldest feels the divorce is his fault. He is not doing well academically.

Lastly the youngest daughter reassures father they will be a family once again. Typical for a child that is not fully aware of what is going on between her parents. She also has experienced feelings of sadness related to parent separation. "Degree of parental disharmony

has been related, in particular, to signs of stress in school- aged children from divorced families”
(Ellison, 1983)

Family Case conceptualization

Family Members: Jane 13 years old, Sandy 5 years old and Joe 12 years old

Reason for referral: The parents in this family have been married for over 13years and have three children. Two teenagers and one school-age child. Mother is a professional and the father is not consistent in keeping employment. The presenting problem: After 13 years of marriage the wife decides she wants to divorce husband. The precipitating event was when she received a call from her neighbor that there was a party in her home with loud music and farm animals. The spouse was having a birthday party for his son although his wife did not agree because of son's grades. The wife states she has been wanting a divorce for a long time now. The husband is in denial that the couple has grown apart and has hopes that his marriage can be saved.

Family strengths and supportive factors

The family dynamic that I observed seemed healthy amongst each member. The parent child relationship is strong with the children's father. Before the divorce the father read bedtime stories. Father son relationship is strong is evident by their handshake. He mentioned to the judge that he loves his children and has never been separated from them. The relationship between mother to children is more of a disciplinary. The children love their mom as well and respect her. The siblings have a good relationship amongst each other as well.

Social Supports seems like mother has a good relationship with her mother. Her mother was with her children while she was at work. Father has support from his brother. Mother is financially stable. Since divorce father has been trying to get a job. Emotional-Behavioral Strengths father has a good sense of humor and the children love him. Cognitive strengths Mother is very smart she is a working woman. Children did improve their grades.

Family symptoms or concerns, outlined by category

Health problems unknown in the family. Social difficulties, with persons outside of family would be the next-door neighbor. The next-door neighbor called the mother at work about the noise that she heard in the home. Financial problems would be the fact that there is only one income. Father is not working, and mom is the soul financial provider in the family.

Emotional -Behavioral Difficulties that are present in each family member are the following.

Oldest daughter expressing feelings of frustration related to divorce and also feeling “messed up about everything.”

Son feels he is to blame for the divorce because the argument occurred over his birthday party.

Youngest Daughter has expressed feelings of sadness. She believes that parents will get back together. She is the youngest of her sibling and does not fully comprehend the divorce process.

There are no known cognitive deficits.

Timeline and priority of Symptoms/Concerns

Divorce is contributing to the oldest daughter being disrespectful to the maid (Mrs. Doubtfire) As well son having feelings of guilt over the divorce believing it was his fault. Also, the youngest

daughter is experiencing feelings of sadness in relation to parent separation. These symptoms began once children were not allowed to see their father consistently.

Overall Case Conceptualization:

Children are being affected by divorce and would like to see their father more often. Children seem to have an emotional attachment to their father. Father would like to see the children more often due to the court rule he is limited to seeing them.

Recommendations:

1. Help oldest daughter process her feelings in relation to her parents' divorce.
2. Help son process his feelings of guilt in relation to the divorce.
3. Help youngest daughter process her feelings of sadness in relation to separation.
4. Find out through the courts if the father can have more visitation rights.

Children go through divorce differently than adults would. It is important that the family receives therapy so that the child has a space to process these feelings. "Divorce is a complex process, and may involve a constellation of stressful life events that tax the child's coping capacities ." (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989) If children are given the proper intervention this can help to reduce stress that children undergo during a divorce. Early intervention can prevent this event in life from affecting them in adulthood.

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