

EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE CLASSIC NATURE OF AXLINE'S EIGHT BASIC PRINCIPLES

BY

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“SUCCESSFUL THERAPY BEGINS WITH THE THERAPIST.” (AXLINE, 1969, p. 64) THE FIRST EDITION OF VIRGINIA AXLINE'S BOOK, *PLAY THERAPY*, WAS PUBLISHED IN 1947. SHE DEVOTED THE ENTIRE BOOK TO DESCRIBING THE BASIC PRINCIPLES SHE VIEWED AS ESSENTIAL FOR THE THERAPIST TO CONVEY IN THE NONDIRECTIVE PLAY THERAPY RELATIONSHIP. IN 1964, AXLINE PUBLISHED *DIBS IN SEARCH OF SELF*, A CASE STUDY INTENDED TO DEPICT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HER EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THERAPEUTIC CONTACTS.

NEARLY HALF A CENTURY LATER, SEVERAL STUDENTS IN TWO INITIAL COUNSELOR EDUCATION COURSES AT SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY SELECTED *DIBS IN SEARCH OF SELF* AS GENERAL INTEREST READING. ALTHOUGH THE STUDENTS HAD NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH PLAY THERAPY THEIR REACTION PAPERS REFLECTED A KEEN REALIZATION OF AXLINE'S PRINCIPLES. FOLLOWING ARE THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES AND EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE “CLASSIC” NATURE OF EACH PRINCIPLE THROUGH EXCERPTS FROM THESE STUDENT'S PAPERS.

PRINCIPLE 1: THE THERAPIST MUST DEVELOP A WARM, FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD, IN WHICH GOOD RAPPORT IS ESTABLISHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

JOAN SHAW: I AM IN AWE OF DR. AXLINE'S TECHNIQUE. BY SEEMINGLY DOING NOTHING BUT OBSERVING A CHILD AT PLAY, SHE EFFECTED MAJOR CHANGES IN DIBS' APPROACH AND REACTION TO HIS ENVIRONMENT. IT IS VERY HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT DIBS, SO DEEPLY TROUBLED, SO SEPARATE FROM THE TYPICAL LIFE OF A SIX YEAR OLD BOY, COULD CHANGE HIS BEHAVIOR SO QUICKLY. WHY DID HE TRUST DR. AXLINE IMMEDIATELY WHEN HE DID NOT TRUST AND DID NOT COMMUNICATE WITH HIS TEACHERS AND PARENTS? IT SEEMS UNBELIEVABLE THAT THE TEACHERS DID NOT CATCH A GLIMMER OF DIB'S SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE, YET HE REVEALED IT TO DR. AXLINE DURING THEIR VERY BRIEF FIRST VISIT.

PRINCIPLE 2: THE THERAPIST ACCEPTS THE CHILD EXACTLY AS HE IS.

JULIA GILBERT: DIB'S TRANSFORMATION FROM A LONELY, RAGE-FILLED CHILD TO A HAPPY, RELAXED CHILD WHO WAS ABLE TO FUNCTION NORMALLY AND USE HIS INTELLECT SEEMED TO HAPPEN IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. IN THE SAFETY OF THE PLAYROOM, DIBS CAME TO TRUST DR. AXLINE. SHE REASSURED HIM THAT NO ONE WOULD HURT HIM THERE. SHE ACCEPTED HIM UNCONDITIONALLY.

DANETTE EMORY: DIBS HAD MANY DOORS LOCKED IN HIS LIFE, AND NEVER HAD THE KEY TO OPEN THEM UNTIL DR. AXLINE CAME ALONG. DIBS IS LIKE MANY CHILDREN, IN THAT THEY WANT TO BE LOVED FOR THEMSELVES RATHER THAN FOR WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM.

EILEEN BORCHERDING: SHARING DIB'S EXPERIENCES IN THE PLAYROOM ENABLED ME TO FEEL HIS EFFORTS AND HIS COMMITMENT TOWARD SECURING AN IDENTITY OF HIS OWN. DR. AXLINE'S TECHNIQUE WAS SUPPORTIVE AND ENCOURAGING. DIBS FELT SECURE AND WAS CONFIDENT IN DR. AXLINE'S ACCEPTANCE OF HIS BEHAVIOR AND REMARKS REGARDLESS OF WHAT HE SAID OR DISPLAYED.

CLARE: UPON READING THE FIRST FEW PAGES, I WANT TO KNOW WHAT LABEL HAD BEEN STUCK ON THE CHILD, AUTISTIC, EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED, OR JUST A "BRAT". DR AXLINE NEVER GAVE A DEFINITE LABEL, AND DID NOT ACT AS THOUGH A DIAGNOSIS WAS IMPORTANT.

JOSE ANTONIO CASTILLO: MOST OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK BELIEVED THAT THIS LITTLE BOY WAS EITHER MENTALLY RETARDED OR HAD BRAIN DAMAGE. TO THEIR ASTONISHMENT, HE DID NOT HAVE EITHER CONDITION. OFTEN I PUT MYSELF IN THAT CHILD'S PLACE AND GO BACK TO A TIME WHEN I MIGHT HAVE BEEN GIVEN SOME FANCY LABEL.

PRINCIPLE 3: THE THERAPIST ESTABLISHES A FEELING OF PERMISSIVENESS IN THE RELATIONSHIP SO THAT THE CHILD FEELS FREE TO EXPRESS HIS FEELING COMPLETELY.

ALEX GARCIA: DIBS STRUGGLED TO TAP INTO HIS EMOTIONAL RESOURCES BEFORE HE BECAME BOUND BY THEM. IT WAS AS THOUGH HE WAS MAKING UP FOR ALL THE YEARS THAT HE WAS A PRISONER IN HIS OWN MIND AND BODY. HE EXHIBITED ANGER, FEAR, AND HAPPINESS IN SUCH CONCENTRATED FORMS THAT IT WAS OVERWHELMING. ALL THE KNOWLEDGE AND FEELINGS THAT HE HAD ACCUMULATED OVER THE YEARS CAME TO THE SURFACE AND BEGAN TO FLOW FROM HIM LIKE WATER.

ROSELIA ALANIZ-GARZA: THE WORK OF VIRGINIA AXLINE BROUGHT THE CHILD OUT OF THE SHADOWS. SHE ACKNOWLEDGED FEELING AS THOUGH DIBS WAS ALL TIED UP IN KNOTS, PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, AS HE EXPRESSED HIS PAIN AND FRUSTRATION IN HIS PLAY.

DANNETTE EMORY: DIBS ALLOWED SOMEONE HE HARDLY KNEW TO SEE A VERY VULNERABLE SIDE OF HIMSELF THAT HAD BEEN PRIVATE FOR SO LONG.

GRACY VASQUEZ: I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HOW SO LITTLE DIALOGUE CAN BE SO EFFECTIVE WHEN A PERSON IS ALLOWED TO ACT OUT HIS/HER FEELINGS. THE REALIZATION OF THE EXTENT OF LOVE, WARMTH, AND CARING PLAY IN EACH OF OUR LIVES IS AMAZING.

ALICIA BILLESCHAS: AS A TEACHER, I HAVE FOUND THAT THE MOST DIFFICULT PART IS NOT IN IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE BUT IN TRYING TO MEET THE CHILD'S EMOTIONAL NEEDS. HOW WELL I REMEMBER THE VISIT TO THE HOME OF THE CHILD WHO SEEMED TO BLOCK OUT ALL REALITY AND DRIFT OFF TO A FANTASY WORLD. HIS MOTHER WOULD NOT ALLOW HIM TO JOIN THE SCOUTS BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN TOO MUCH FUN FOR HIM. SHE REFUSED TO ALLOW HER SON TO PLAY WITH HIS SEEMINGLY ONLY FRIEND BECAUSE THE CHILD WAS A MEMBER OF THE "WRONG" RELIGION. SHE WAS DETERMINED TO BREAK HER SON'S SPIRIT AND SOUL. ANOTHER YEAR, I MET STUDENT "E" AND HIS MOTHER. "ARE YOU HIS GRANDMOTHER?" I ASKED THE WOMAN OF ABOUT 75. "I AM HIS MOTHER," SHE REPLIED. SHE PROCEEDED TO TELL ME THAT HER CHILD WAS EVIL AND THE ONLY WAY TO CONTROL HIM WAS TO BEAT IT OUT OF HIM. I WOULD HAVE HER SUPPORT WHENEVER STERN AND SWIFT PUNISHMENT WAS WARRANTED; SHE WOULD BE THERE TO SEE THAT HE GOT HIS "JUST REWARDS." THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, I STRUGGLED WITH E AND HIS EMOTIONS. TOWARD THE END OF THE YEAR, HE SEEMED MORE AT EASE WITH HIMSELF AND WAS A VERY LOVING KIND INDIVIDUAL. LIKE DIBS, E, TOO WAS SEARCHING FOR ACCEPTANCE.

JOSE ANTONIO CASTILLO: I WAS SIX YEARS OLD; I DID NOT KNOW A SINGLE WORD IN ENGLISH. AS I WAS TAKEN TO SEVERAL CLASSROOMS, EVERYONE SHOOK THEIR HEADS AS IF TO SAY "YOU HAVE HIM; YOU KEEP HIM." I DID NOT SPEAK TO ANY OF MY CLASSMATES FOR A LONG TIME....WOULD GO AND SIT IN A CORNER...AND OBSERVE

OTHER CHILDREN AT PLAY. DIBS MUST HAVE FELT THE SAME WAY I DID. HE DID NOT KNOW WHO TO TRUST, AND , IF HE SPOKE, WOULD IT BE THE CORRECT THING TO DO OR SAY?

PRINCIPLE 4: THE THERAPIST IS ALERT TO RECOGNIZE THE FEELINGS THE CHILD IS EXPRESSING AND REFLECTS THOSE FEELING BACK TO HIM IN SUCH A MANNER THAT HE GAINS INSIGHT INTO HIS BEHAVIOR.

VERONICA ZAMARRIPA: HOW COULD A CHILD WHO WAS SO WITHDRAWN FROM HIS FAMILY AND SOCIETY BE MOTIVATED TO EMERGE FROM HIS SHELL? THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST WAS TO CREATE A RELAXED, OPTIMISTIC, SENSITIVE, AND NONTHREATENING ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER FOR DIBS TO GAIN TRUST AND FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS HIS FEELINGS. USING A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES, THE THERAPIST SUCCESSFULLY ENCOURAGED DIBS TO EXPRESS HIS FEELINGS.

CAREN GOLDSMITH: VIRGINIA AXLINE SEEMED TO HAVE AN INTUITIVE SENSE OF WHAT TO SAY AND WHEN TO SAY IT. HER PATIENCE IN DEALING WITH DIBS AND DRAWING HIM OUT WAS REMARKABLE.

ROSELIA ALANIZ-GARCIA: HIS PLAY EXPRESSED PAIN AND FRUSTRATION. TO THE EYES OF COMMON PEOPLE, THIS PROBABLY WOULD HAVE LOOKED LIKE EVERY DAY CHILD PLAY, BUT TO MS. AXLINE IT WAS MORE THAN THAT. IT WAS "PAINFUL" PLAY.

PATRICIA ARMOUR: I AM REMINDED OF THE MANY CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS I HAVE WORKED WITH, CARED ABOUT, AND HELPED DURING MY THIRTEEN YEARS AS A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER. AT ONE POINT, DIBS REMINDED THE COUNSELOR OF SOMETHING SHE ONCE SAID TO HIM, AND SHE REPLIED, " I SAID THAT?" IT MADE ME THINK OF THE MANY THINGS I SAID TO MY STUDENTS TRYING TO GET MY PONT ACROSS, YET, I WONDER, WHAT EXACTLY DO THEY HEAR? I PLAN TO CHOOSE MY WORDS MORE CAREFULLY IN THE FUTURE.

CELESTINE MARTINEZ: DIBS LEARNED HE COULD HATE AS WELL AS LOVE, CONDEMN AS WELL AS PARDON. HIS INCREASING KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF HELPED HIM DEAL WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD WITH CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY. AS IT TURNED OUT, DIBS WAS CAPABLE OF GREAT INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT, BUT HIS ABILITIES WERE DOMINATED BY HIS EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES. DIBS' STORY HELPED ME REALIZE AND REMEMBER THAT THE VERY YOUNG ALSO WANT TO FEEL WORTHWHILE AND WANT TO BE RESPECTED AND ACCEPTED AS HUMAN BEINGS WORTHY OF DIGNITY.

PRINCIPLE 5: THE THERAPIST MAINTAINS A DEEP RESPECT FOR THE CHILD'S ABILITY TO SOLVE HIS OWN PROBLEMS IF GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE CHOICES AND TO INSTITUTE CHANGE IS THE CHILD'S.

ALLISON TORRES: DIBS CAPTURED MY INNERMOST FEELINGS. HIS MENTAL STRENGTH TO OVERCOME SUCH A PERSONAL CRISIS, AT SUCH A TENDER AGE, WAS EMOTIONALLY MOVING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT DIBS WAS TRAPPED IN A PERSON OF FEAR AND RAGE.

ROSELIA ALANIZ-GARCIA: THE COUNSELOR RESPECTED THE POWER IN THE VERY REJECTED AND EMOTIONALLY DEPRIVED CHILD. IT WAS IN DIBS' SYMBOLIC PLAY THAT HE Poured OUT HIS HURT, LET GOT OF HIS BRUISED FEELINGS, AND EMERGED WITH A SENSE OF STRENGTH AND SECURITY. HE HAD GONE IN SEARCH OF A SELF THAT HE COULD CLAIM WITH PROUD IDENTITY....A CONCEPT OF SELF THAT WAS MORE IN HARMONY WITH THE CAPACITY WITHIN HIM. HE WAS NO LONGER SUBMERGED UNDER HIS FEELINGS OF FEAR AND ANGER, HATRED, AND GUILT. HE BECAME A PERSON IN HIS

OWN RIGHT. HE WAS NO LONGER AFRAID OF HIMSELF; HE HAD LEARNED TO BE HIMSELF, TO BELIEVE IN HIMSELF, TO FREE HIMSELF.

CLEMENCIA TRUTEL: DIBS RELEASED HIS SUPPRESSED INTELLIGENCE AND FEELINGS WHICH ENABLED HIM TO MAKE A BREATHELESS DISCOVERY OF HIS INNER SELF. THE DRAMATIC IMPACT OF THIS DISCOVERY WAS THAT IT WAS ACHIEVED BY DIBS' OWN EFFORTS AND DETERMINATION. DR. AXLINE ACTED STRICTLY AS A FACILITATOR WHILE DIBS UNDERTOOK THE PAINFUL PATH OF SELF-DISCOVERY WITH TREMENDOUS COURAGE.

PATRICIA ARMOUR: I FOUND *DIBS IN SEARCH OF SELF* TO BE A TEACHING TOOL, A HEARTWARMING BOOK, AND A MOTIVATOR. IT REMINDED ME THAT CHILDREN POSSESS STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND DETERMINATION TO SURVIVE.

ALICIA BILLESCHAS I FOUND MYSELF CRYING WHEN DIBS STRUGGLED WITH HIS LONELINESS, HIS REJECTION, AND HIS DESIRE TO BE LOVED. I WAS HIS CHEERLEADER ON THE SIDELINES, REJOICING WHEN HE FOUND THE HAPPINESS FOR WHICH HE WAS SEARCHING.

ALEX GARCIA: DIBS' FASCINATION WITH CHURCH SHOWED AN INTEREST IN THE UNKNOWN. IT SHOWED THAT DIBS WAS CAPABLE OF FACING HIS FEARS AND, IN THE END, CONQUERING THEM.

DEBBIE ROBERSON: THE MOST AMAZING RELATIONSHIP OF ALL WAS THE ONE BETWEEN "MISS A" AND DIBS. THROUGHOUT THE THERAPY SESSIONS, SHE WAS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE COMPONENTS OF WHAT MADE DIBS THE WAY HE WAS, YET SHE DID NOT USE THAT INFORMATION DURING THE PLAY THERAPY. D R. AXLINE GAVE DIBS THE RESPECT AND FREEDOM TO DISCOVER THE ANSWERS FOR HIMSELF.

EILEEN BORCHERDING: I FOUND MYSELF ON AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER AS I IDENTIFIED WITH THE FRUSTRATION OF DIBS' TEACHERS...CASTING DIBS' PARENTS AS THE VILLAINS IN THIS STORY, AND, OR COURSE, PUTTING DR. AXLINE ON A WHITE HORSE AND GIVING HER A WHITE HAT. I FOUND MYSELF CHEERING EACH STEP THAT DIBS MADE IN HIS "SEARCH FOR SELF."

PRINCIPLE 6: THE THERAPIST DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO DIRECT THE CHILD'S ACTIONS OR CONVERSATION IN ANY MANNER. THE CHILD LEADS THE WAY; THE THERAPIST FOLLOWS.

CLEMENCIA TREUTEL: I WAS FLABBERGASTED BY THE YOUNG BOY'S STRENGTH TO PURSUE PAINFUL MEMORIES OF NEGLECT AND REJECTION THROUGH PLAY, AND I COULD NOT HELP EMPATHIZING, FEELING, AND CRYING WITH HIM. AT TIMES, HIS PROCESS OF RECOVERY WAS SO SLOW THAT I WOULD LOSE MY SELF-RESTRAINT AS TO LETTING HIM PROGRESS AT HIS OWN PACE WITHOUT INTERVENING AND INTERFERING. I FOUND MYSELF WANTING TO DIRECT HIS ACTING, BUT DR. AXLINE STAYED IN THE BACKGROUND, GIVING DIBS THE LEAD AT ALL TIMES AND LETTING HIM WORK THROUGH HIS PROBLEMS AS WELL HE COULD.

JULIA GILBERT: DR. AXLINE GAVE DIBS COMPLETE FREEDOM TO DIRECT HIS RECOVERY PROCESS. DIBS DIRECTED THE ACTIVITY IN THE PLAYROOM, AND DR. AXLINE RESTATED HIS WORDS. DR. AXLINE ALLOWED DIBS TO JUST "BE," AND HE WAS ABLE TO REDIRECT HIMSELF AND FACE HIS ISSUES (ENEMIES) AS HE WAS READY TO DO SO. THROUGH THE USE OF THE PLAYROOM TOYS, DIBS LEARNED TO EXPRESS HIS FEELINGS. AS HE RID HIMSELF OF THE HURT AND ANGER, HE WAS FILLED WITH COURAGE AND STRENGTH. HE

LEARNED TO UNDERSTAND, TO COPE, AND TO CONTROL HIS FEELINGS. HE BEGAN TO EMERGE AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

PATRICA ARMOUR: BY BEING CAREFUL NOT TO SUGGEST ACTIVITIES AND BY MAKING ONLY THOSE COMMENTS THAT RESTATED WHAT THE CHILD SAID, THE THERAPIST WAS ABLE TO ALLOW DIBS TO UTILIZE KNOWLEDGE INSIDE HIMSELF SO THAT HE COULD BECOME OUTWARDLY SECURE. COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING WERE ACHIEVED THROUGH ALLOWING THE CLIENT TO LEAD THE WAY AND SET THE PACE. I CONTINUALLY GOT THE MESSAGE THAT A THERAPIST MUST LEARN TO LISTEN, NOT TO ADVISE. AXLINE STRESSED THAT THE CLIENT HAS TO LEARN TO RESPECT HIMSELF AND FEEL WORTHWHILE IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HIMSELF.

JOAN SHAW: THE NATURE OF THE TOYS IN THE PLAYROOM INTRIGUED ME...DOLLHOUSES WITH REMOVABLE WALLS AND DOORS, SOLDIERS, PAINTS AND WATER, A BABY BOTTLE FOR SUCKING, AND OF COURSE, THE WONDERFUL WORLD TEST SET WITH WHICH DIBS CREATED HIS OWN WORLDS. DIBS WAS ALLOWED TO DO AS HE WISHED, SET HIS OWN PACE, MAKE HIS OWN SELECTIONS, AND USE THE TOYS IN ALMOST ANY MANNER. DR. AXLINE DID NOT REDIRECT, BUT ONLY REITERATED HIS OBSERVATIONS AND EMPATHIZED WITH HIS FEELINGS.

CLARE ROBERTSON: IN THERAPY, THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE LISTENING AND LESS TALKING IS STRESSED. THIS BOOK REINFORCED THIS IDEA WITH THE MANY TIMES DR. AXLINE KEPT HER MOUTH CLOSED WHEN I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING.

ALEX GARCIA: DR. AXLINE WAS A PILLAR OF STRENGTH WHO MUST BE COMMENDED FOR HER ABILITIES AS A THERAPIST. SHE EXHIBITED CONTROL THAT IS UNIQUE.

PRINCIPLE 7: THE THERAPIST DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO HURRY THE THERAPY ALONG. IT IS A GRADUAL PROCESS AND IS RECOGNIZED AS SUCH BY THE THERAPIST.

ROSELIA ALANIZ-GARZA: DIBS WAS A FORTUNATE CHILD IN THAT HE ENCOUNTERED ANOTHER HUMAN BEING (MS. AXLINE) WHO WAS READY TO LISTEN, EVEN TO SHARE THE SILENCE WHEN THE WORDS WERE ALL GONE. SHE WAS A THERAPIST WHO WOULD RESTRAIN FROM HOLDING HIM TO SHOW LOVE AND AFFECTION WHEN SHE KNEW THAT, IN SPITE OF BEING THE BIGGEST NEED FOR THE CHILD, IT WAS NOT THE RIGHT TIME YET.

CLARE ROBERTSON: DR. AXLINE DID AN EXCELLENT JOB OF KNOWING WHAT THIS READING WAS THINKING, AND ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS JUST AS I BEGAN ASKING THEM. SEVERAL TIMES I WANTED HER TO ASK DIBS WHY HE SAID SOMETHING, AND SHE EXPLAINED THAT SHE COULD NOT PUSH HIM BEYOND WHERE HE FELT SAFE.

DEBBIE ROBERTSON: I FOUND "MISS A" TO HAVE A VERY SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN HOW SHE HANDLED EACH STEP OF DIB'S DEVELOPMENT. SHE WAS CAUTIOUS NOT TO PUSH OR PRESS FOR ANSWERS FROM DIBS, BUT TO LET HIM BE HIMSELF. TO THE LAY PERSON, THAT COULD BE A VERY FRUSTRATING AND EXASPERATING PROCESS. NOW, I UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF ALLOWING DIBS TO FIND HIMSELF EMOTIONALLY AND SOCIALLY. THESE FACTORS COULD NOT BE FORCED UPON HIM, AS HIS PARENTS HAD UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIED.

VERONICA ZAMARRIPA: THIS CASE STUDY IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH THROUGH PLAY THERAPY.

EILEEN BORCHERDING: I WONDER IF DIBS HAD NOT MADE ANY EFFORT IN THE PLAYROOM, IF DR. AXLINE WOULD HAVE PROMPTED HIM IN SOME WAY? WERE THERE EVERY DAYS WHEN NOTHING OCCURRED? WOULD A LESS INTELLIGENT CHILD HAVE

MADE SUCH SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS? WAS DIBS MORE DETERMINED THAN OTHERS TO RESOLVE HIS DIFFICULTIES? WHAT IMPACT DID MENTAL STIMULATION FROM HIS PARENTS HAVE ON THERAPY? IS DIBS THE NORM, OR IS HE THE EXCEPTION?

PRINCIPLE 8: THE THERAPIST ESTABLISHED ONLY THOSE LIMITATIONS THAT ARE NECESSARY TO ANCHOR THE THERAPY TO THE WORLD OF REALITY AND TO MAKE THE CHILD AWARE OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE RELATIONSHIP.

THERESA TILTON: MY STRONGEST REACTION WAS TO DR. AXLINE HERSELF, BOTH AS A THERAPIST AND AS A HUMAN BEING. I WAS INSPIRED BY HER UNWAVERING DEDICATION TO HELPING DIBS TO ACHIEVE EMOTIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND BY HOW CAREFULLY SHE EVEN USED THE SMALLEST RESPONSE OR INCIDENT TO FURTHER THAT GOAL. FOR EXAMPLE, AFTER THEIR VERY FIRST SESSION, SHE WALKED DIBS ONLY HALFWAY BACK TO HIS CLASSROOM BEFORE ASKING HIM IF HE COULD GET THE REST OF THE WAY BY HIMSELF. DR. AXLINE'S CLEAR-SIGHTED VISION OF WHAT DIBS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE, COUPLED WITH THE STRENGTH OF HER CONVICTIONS, MADE HER REJECT CONSOLING HIM OR GIVING HIM AN EXTRA SHOW OF AFFECTION OR SYMPATHY.

CLARE ROBERTSON: IT SEEMED LIKE ANY BABY-SITTER COULD HAVE DONE WHAT MISS A DID: JUST SIT THERE. YES, ANYTHING IS EASY IF YOU KNOW HOW! AT TIME IS WOULD ASK, "WHY DID SHE DO THAT?" AT THE BEGINNING, DR. AXLINE SAID SHE KNEW DIBS NEEDED AFFECTION AND APPROVAL FROM ADULTS, BUT SHE DID NOT HUG HIM OR PRAISE HIM BECAUSE HE MIGHT BECOME DEPENDENT ON HER. SOONER OR LATER, HE WOULD HAVE TO WEAN HIMSELF OF HER WHICH WOULD CAUSE HIM TO SUFFER, SO SHE KEPT HER DISTANCE. AS A TEACHER, MY FIRST URGE IS TO PRAISE, AND, AS A SIMPLE, CARING PERSON, MY FIRST URGE IS TO HUG CHILDREN. THIS BOOK SHOWED ME HOW TOUGH A PLAY THERAPIST HAS TO BE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING AT WHAT WILL BENEFIT THE CHILD IN THE LONG RUN.

ALEX GARCIA: ALTHOUGH DIBS KNEW WHAT HE WAS MENTALLY CAPABLE OF AS FAR AS LEARNING, IT WAS ONLY WHEN HE RECEIVED THE UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT FROM MS. AXLINE THAT HE BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE WHO WERE WILLING TO BE PATIENT WITH HIM.

REFERENCES

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