

Emidio Tribulato

"I HATE YOU!"

-
- Conflict, aggression and violence between the sexes

-

Copyright 2019 - Emidio Tribulato
Messina - Viale annunziata 72
E- mail: postmaster@cslogos.it
Website: www.cslogos.it

Published by:
Lulu.com ISBN: 978-0-
244-84059-4
Year 2019

Index

Page

Foreword	9
Chapter 1	
<i>The conflict</i>	13
Chapter2	
<i>Aggression</i>	17
The genesis aggression	19
Physiological and pathological aggression	25
Manifestations of aggression	28
The functions aggression	29
Aggression in different periods of life	31
Aggression in the two sexes	35
Expressions aggression	38
Chapter 3	
<i>Violence</i>	47
Physical violence (<i>Vis absoluta</i>)	49
Psychological violence (<i>compulsive vis</i>)	49
Violence in the two sexes	56
Environmental and personal variables	61
The victims' behaviour	62
Consequences for minors	64
The evaluation of acts of violence	72
Chapter 4	
<i>The causes</i>	77
Anatomical aspects	78

Genetic aspects	80
Hormonal aspects	81
<i>Neurotransmitters</i>	83
Psychological aspects	84
<i>The psychogenic reaction</i>	84
<i>Stress</i>	85
<i>Frustration</i>	89
<i>Psychic trauma</i>	93
Consequences of psychological disorders	94
Retaliation	96
Increased sensitivity, susceptibility and reactivity	97
The difficulty of forgiveness	98
Difficulties in relationships	99
Feelings of sadness and depression	99
Guilt	100
The difficulties of dialogue	101
The accentuation of needs	101
Sexual difficulties	102
Sadomasochistic behaviour	102
The decrease in self-esteem	103
The causes of psychological disorders	103
<i>Healthy and functional families</i>	103
<i>Sick or dysfunctional families</i>	107
<i>Super-evaluation of our possibilities and capabilities</i>	112
Socio-relational aspects	121
<i>The negative view of the opposite sex</i>	122
<i>The disappearance of proper etiquette between the sexes</i>	129
<i>The rise of infidelity</i>	135
<i>The consequences</i>	148
<i>Jealousy</i>	150
Physical and emotional detachment	157
Aggressiveness from excessive expectations	160
The desire for power and possession	163
Defence of rights and lack of commitment to duties	167
Separation and divorce	171

<i>Aggressiveness during and after separation</i>	176
<i>Consequences for children</i>	182
The non-acceptance of gender differences	184
Choosing a partner	186
Violence as imitation and learning	192
Disruption of traditional roles	199
Chapter 5	
<i>Prevention</i>	233
Some basic concepts	234
Effective dialogue	240
Optimism cheerfulness	248
Forgiveness	249
Caring for relationships	252
<i>Couple therapies</i>	254
<i>Family therapies</i>	256
<i>Family counselling</i>	258
<i>Family mediation</i>	259
BIBLIOGRAPHY	263

FOREWORD

That between human beings and especially between different sexes, there can be different and sometimes conflicting opinions, thoughts and behaviour, is not strange, nor should it surprise us. Come that it should not be strange, nor should it surprise us, that conflict situations arise between people on how to deal with or solve a certain common difficulty or problem. However, in such cases, it is expected that aggressive or even violent behaviour does not occur between these people.

There is no doubt that there are, and there are very many, conflictual situations in which our ideas, choices and decisions are clearly opposed to those of others. Nevertheless, we should still be able to maintain an open and dialogical, if not perfectly serene and cordial, relationship with the other party. In the end, it should not be difficult to continue to respect other person, even if it is not perfectly serene and cordial.

since each of us is the bearer of different and conflicting ideas and thoughts, since respect for the other as a person, even if one does not accept and agree with his or her ideas, decisions or behaviour, is fundamental good civilised living.

If, on the other hand, this is not the case, if disagreements on how to think and act or on the choices to be made or already made provoke resentment, frustration and intense, violent and basically destructive emotions, such as resentment, anger rage, which can, in some cases, lead to hatred and a desire for revenge and destruction and, consequently, to acts of physical or psychological violence, has gone wrong, something important has not worked properly, something has been missing.

The most serious result of the conflict and violence between the sexes is that understanding, help, closeness and mutual support between men and women have become rare and difficult, if not impossible, for many couples. Positive and supportive behaviour has been replaced and imposed by a series of increasingly reactive and negative relationships, marred by mutual suspicion, bitterness, anger and intolerance; or, more seriously, by apparent detachment, coldness and indifference.

Unfortunately, in the face of these realities, both the newspapers and the many TV and other mass media rarely manage to investigate and thus recognise the multiplicity and variety of issues, in themselves considerably complex and articulate, that provoke such emotions and behaviour.

The reason for these simplifications is well known: the users of the mass media are mostly judged to be very lazy

people, who would hardly be able to

to discover and understand the numerous, subtle nuances and variabilities present in this, as in so many other important issues. Therefore, in order to be read and listened to, the various journalists and television presenters tend to oversimplify the topics proposed to the general public, neglecting and not delving into the truer, real and deeper causes of this sad phenomenon.

Such rudimentary messages induce readers and listeners to schematise this reality as much as possible in their minds, so that the various opinions resemble advertisements rather than a calm and thorough examination. All this predictably makes it impossible to recognise the real causes and possible solutions.

On the other hand, being able to deal objectively and in depth with these topics is not easy, since they immediately arouse intense and often uncontrolled and irrational emotions, due not only to traumatic personal experiences, but also to a series of stereotypes, preconceptions, conditionings, clichés and prejudices that confuse and make it difficult to see both the real causes and the true extent of certain serious contrasts between the sexes.

All this, however, should not prevent us from trying. For if we succeed in investigating and tackling in a serene and rational manner the various issues aimed at the knowledge, prevention and treatment of this aberrant phenomenon, not only will the multitude of women and men directly involved in serious and deleterious clashes benefit immediately, but also their families and the many minors who are forced to watch helplessly, frightened and disappointed, before they are forced

to take part in the first of these events.

to the enormous tension and violence that erupts within their families and then to their dissolution. Tension, violence and dissolution that result in the absence or questioning of their fundamental and indispensable points of reference.

This book is therefore an attempt to overcome oversimplifications, as well as emotionalism and preconceptions, in order to better understand the causes that have disrupted gender relations in recent decades. This is done in order to positively change the perverse mechanisms that see men and women as two alien races competing and fighting against each other and not as two fundamental elements of one splendid humanity, whose understanding, cooperation and mutual love have been and are the basis of personal, family and social well-being.

The conflict

Conflict is the situation that arises between conflicting ideas, actions and behaviour. In some respects, it is a functional expression, when mutual adaptation is necessary between people, due to different ideas and expectations about the organisation and the realisation of the essential goals that each individual sets out to achieve. Indeed, under favourable conditions, certain competitive tendencies may mark the transition to the achievement of new levels of union and collaboration. Thus, conflict can be either a creative force in the development of the couple or the family, or a disruptive force. It can be a catalysing or paralysing element; it can integrate the human experience or it can disintegrate it; it can give an impetus to human development and adaptation, just as it can induce arrest, deformation or both (Ackerman, 1970, pp. 77-78). However, even if

Fighting does not mean not loving each other, and even if sometimes fighting is liberating, the continuation of quarrelsome behaviour is certainly an indication of a pathology in the relationship or of a pathology present in one or both of the people experiencing this conflictual relationship.

In marital disorders, as in other situations, conflicts may be, to varying degrees, overt or covert, real or unreal, conscious or unconscious. What is more, the conflict between the spouses has a particular relationship to the structure of the internal conflict within each. Therefore, the marital conflict may aggravate the real nature of this internal conflict or may serve to conceal it (Ackerman, 1968, p. 199).

In family life, conflict can occur at many levels. There can be conflict between the family and the surrounding community: neighbours, neighbourhood committees, apartment blocks, politicians and local administrations. Or there may be conflicts within the same household, between some family members and others: father against mother and vice versa, brothers against sisters, father and mother against children, boys against girls in the family, or conversely, father and some daughters against mother and other children. Finally, as mentioned above, conflict can be present within the psyche of the various family members (Ackerman, 1970, p. 79).

There are essentially two types of conflict: *one open and one covered*. In the former (*open conflict*), the two parties directly and explicitly express their disagreement and hostility about each other's problems or behaviour. In contrast, in the *covered conflict*, the

striking manifestations. This, however, is present and active even if in a barely visible manner. The presence of one or the other type of conflict is linked to the personal characteristics of the people involved, but also to the type of family and society in which the couple lives and relates.

Based evolution, Ackerman (1970, p. 80) describes other types of conflicts: *resolved, compensated, active and decompensated*.

1. *Conflict resolved*. The conflict is perceived correctly and a rational solution is quickly found.
2. *Conflict compensated*. The conflict is perceived correctly, it is contained, while an effective solution is sought, which is not possible at the moment.
3. *Unbalanced conflict*. The conflict is misperceived or distorted. The two people cannot find a suitable compromise. Therefore, not being contained in a valid way, the conflict overflows into irrational behaviour. Moreover, as it is not resolved, it inevitably leads to the progressive disorganisation of family relations.

Ackerman (1970, p. 80) describes other ways when he states: 'The way of entering into conflict and sustaining it may be *appropriate or inappropriate*, for the most important problems of the family. It may be *rational or irrational*, it may be *central or peripheral* importance, for the life of the family: the conflict may be *tacit or open, conscious or in-conscious, diffuse or circumscribed*; it may be *benign or malignant, reversible or irreversible*'.

As far as conflict outcomes are concerned, the consequences may be different:

- There can be a tightening of roles.
- A loosening and increase in emotional distance.
- A weakening of communication or a distortion of it.
- A resort to diversion and escape.
- An indulgence in scapegoating.
- An indulging in aggressive acts and attitudes of *acting out*.
- It is possible that an irrational compromise was made that favoured one side of the family while damaging another (Ackerman, 1970, p. 81).

Aggression

Aggression is the tendency, which can be present in any behaviour or fantasy, aimed at hetero- or self-destruction, or self-assertion (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 35). For Hacker (1971, p. 66): 'We define by the word 'aggression' that disposition and energy peculiar to man that are expressed originally in activity and subsequently in the most diverse individual and collective, socially acquired and transmitted forms of self-assertion, forms that can go as far as cruelty'.

Meazzini (2006, pp. 8-9) distinguishes *aggressive behaviour*, in which there is an action intentionally directed at producing harm of a physical or moral nature to others, *from aggressive intention*, which is a state of mind that may also not be followed by any harm. There are therefore for

This author has two different concepts in this term. In one, which is related to the definition found psychoanalysis and psychiatry, there is the concept of aggressive behaviour, sometimes only imagined or fantasised, while in other cases the ideas of inflicting harm or injury on oneself or another individual are implemented.

For Ajuriaguerra (1995, p. 9), the concept of aggression is also linked to the Latin etymology *adgressus - adgredior*, which means to go forward, to move, to approach in a decisive, determined manner. This further meaning indicates facing with courage the obstacles and mishaps in life that come in the way of our needs and desires. How many times have we heard from our parents, especially from our fathers, phrases like these: "Tomorrow you will be quizzed, be sure to face this test with grit and determination. "Don't be afraid of the professor". "Be strong and decisive in your answers; professors do not like people who stammer and expound concepts in a timid and hesitant manner. For Ajuriaguerra too, aggression, if not excessive, can be considered a force of the ego. It is a force that is useful to children and adolescents who, if they are brought up free of frustration, lack the drive and energy to cope with the vicissitudes of life (Ajuriaguerra, 1993, p. 474).

What unites all these meanings is the idea of competition, the quest for dominance or the concept of subjugating those who are perceived as rivals, enemies or who oppose our aspirations, needs and desires (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 35).

The genesis aggression

Ideas on the emergence of aggression are diverse and, at times, conflicting.

There is debate as to whether the aggressive instinct is innate or learned, and if it is accepted that it is learned, the question arises as to what and what stigmas cause it to emerge or provoke it. Furthermore, it is still debated among scholars whether it is a fundamentally useful or harmful instinct.

For S. Freud, aggression is an innate but di- stinctive instinct. At the basis of aggression is the death instinct: *Thanatos*, which stands in opposition to the vital instinct, *Eros*. For the father of psychoanalysis, aggression is continually generated by that very instinct, which violently and destructively unleashes itself on external objects that obstruct the ego, thereby restoring the organism's internal balance. For these reasons, aggression is related both to the organism's internal state and to the intensity and quality of the external stimuli that provoke it.

Ackerman (1968, p. 79), on the other hand, sees aggression differently: *'I do not regard aggression and destructive tendencies as the expression of a death instinct, but rather as a misdirection of a healthy process of adaptation, a defence, a way of controlling the environment, of combating frustration and anxiety and of asserting one's identity in interpersonal situations'*.

For other authors, aggression is also an innate but psychologically useful instinct. For example, for Slepj (2005, p. 165) aggression is a relevant psychological element with multiple purposes and functions. In its constructive aspect it is,

without-

It allows for exploration and conquest, both real and imagined, it allows for confrontation with limits, danger and fear, which can be resized precisely by trusting in one's own strengths and acquired experience.

For ethologists such as Lorenz (1997), aggression is an indispensable instinct for preserving the survival of humans, as well as animals. The latter, through the mechanism of aggression and defence, feed on other animals, defend their offspring, drive their adversaries away, compete sexually and thus reproduce the species. The same concept is expressed by evolutionary psychologists, for whom aggressive behaviour can be considered an archaic cultural heritage that has fulfilled an important adaptive purpose since ancient times.

For other authors, on the other hand, this instinct is triggered by frustrations or other limiting, violent or aggressive behaviour from the environment. Hence, people attack others because they have acquired aggressive reactions through past experiences; because they receive or expect various forms of reward in committing such actions; or because they are incited to aggression by particular social or environmental conditions.

The theory of Dollard, *et al.* (1939, p. 128), one of the first psychological theories of aggression, sees as cause of aggression any frustration, i.e. a psychological situation in which the subject fails to achieve the goal he had set himself. Aggressiveness can therefore be

The impossibility of satisfying one's own needs produces a cumule of energy that must necessarily find its way out through aggressive behaviour that may be directed either at the actual cause of frustration or at a beret. The impossibility of satisfying one's needs produces an accumulation of energy that must necessarily find a way of discharge through aggressive behaviour, which may be directed either at the actual cause of the frustration or at a secondary target that has nothing to do with the failure to satisfy one's needs, but which allows the accumulated energy to be released.

Ajuriaguerra (1993, p. 472) also insists on the role of frustration in the genesis of aggression. Therefore, aggression for this author would depend on deprivations or deficiencies that alter constructive drives. In fact, this author says: 'If there are hereditary factors in aggression, as the experiences of genetic selection show, it is also known that aggression is strongly influenced by the environment, either through learning or through lack of affection'.

According to the cognitive-neo-associationist model, the antecedents of aggressive behaviour can be traced back to the individual's experiences of anger related to unpleasantness. Children brought up in a violent and aggressive environment may react by perpetuating these behaviours on others or by trying to distance themselves from them. Thus, in some cases there are reactions of anger, aggression and violence, while in other cases the reaction will be one of flight. The pre- valence of one response or another is determined by a combination of genetic and situational factors, but also by ap- plications.

Also for Mereloo (1968, 457-462), human aggression is not innate, but is the result of the disorganisation of impulses due to multiple internal and external factors and the lack of cultural elements and control. He views aggression as the response to frustrations such as fame, thirst, lack of affection, lack of communication with others, lack of sexual satisfaction, lack of acceptance.

For Bonino (2005, p.14), aggression stems from the inability to deal with situations of frustration in a non-aggressive manner, in the presence of a social imperative that always dictates success and the maximum realisation of one's desires.

For behaviourists, any human behaviour would be acquired through a learning process. Therefore, aggressive behaviour could be reinforced or repressed with appropriate training. According to this approach, the subject's aggressive response can be maintained as a habitual style of interaction, as long as it enables a desired goal to be achieved. In practice, when aggressive behaviour provides the subject with a rewarding consequence, this situation acts as reinforcement. Thus, many aggressive behaviours are reinforced, more or less consciously, by the subject's living environment. If, for example, a child with his aggressive behaviour towards his little brother has obtained his little brother's toy, he learns that being aggressive rewards aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour can also be reinforced when it manages to avoid an unwelcome consequence. Thus, for example, if through his verbal aggression the child has achieved not to carry out the task requested by his parents, he

will have learnt that this behaviour is an excellent strategy to avoid unwanted assignments.

For Scott (1993, p. 471) aggressive behaviour is learned and the habit of attacking does not appear until later in the animal's youth, when it experiences fighting for food and clashes with youngsters of its age.

For Hacker (1971, p. 88), aggression can arise from the invasion of living and personal space: *'Every individual and every civilisation regards personal living space, the invasion of which generates a feeling of loss of autonomy and dignity, as something sacrosanct and sacred, just as they regard the aggression necessary for the defence of its inviolability as sanctifying'*.

According to the same author (Hacker, 1971, p. 83): *'By a kind of biological compulsion, man would tend towards possession and the highest possible prestige. The conquest of respect his fellows, which can only be acquired by violent struggle, would be a natural, instinctive necessity'*.

The adaptive function would explain the high levels of aggression present among males of various animal species, in which it is a means of defending oneself against attacks, of intimidating other males or rival females in order to avoid sexual betrayal, but also a means of acquiring resources that are considered useful or indispensable for oneself or for the community in which the subject lives. However, while aggressive behaviour in animals manifests itself in stereotyped and repetitive behaviour, in humans this instinct can and should be a means of acquiring resources that are useful or indispensable for oneself or the community in which one lives.

should be modulated by the higher cortical centres, which are clearly influenced by moral, social and religious values.

Finally for Bollea (1985, p. 267): *'Aggression can give rise to negative and later destructive behaviour, only and essentially as a reaction to an external or internal conflict, a conflict which, depending on the developmental period in which it arose, partly fixes the mode of aggression of that period for subsequent periods'*.

In conclusion, although it is difficult to say how much 'innate' and 'reactive and/or acquired' we can recognise in man's aggressive behaviour, and although not everything is clear about the origin and function aggression, we do know something:

- *We know that it exists.* The wars that are present in every period of history in many parts of the planet, the constant killings, injuries and other signs, even if not always bloody, of aggression, present in every city, in every apartment block as well as in many families, dot the history of mankind since Cain and Abel.
- *We know that it is present in each of us.* Who has not felt resentment and indeed aggression when someone has deliberately hurt us physically or mentally, taken something that belonged to us or failed to give us our due?
- *We know that in various ways it is present in all people around us,* so much so that we can safely say that much of the suffering we have experienced in our lives has been caused by persons.

people who vented their negative emotions on us.

- *We know that in various forms is present in all ages.* Aggressive emotions, thoughts and actions are present from birth and in all periods of our lives. They exist in the young child, for example when he or she is scolded, punished or when he or she does not accept 'no' and impositions of adults, even if dictated for good, just as they exist in the adolescent, young person or in the elderly.
- *We know aggression is very much linked to the upbringing received but also to the deep inner experiences, living environment and the suffering endured especially in childhood.* Therefore, our past, together with the environment in which we have conducted our experiences, heavily influences the motives that lead to aggressive behaviour, its severity and frequency, but also the ways we choose to express it.

Physiological and pathological aggression

Depending on the severity and the way it manifests itself we can distinguish between *physiological* and *pathological aggression*.

Physiological aggression is a harmful emotion, thought or action that is enacted when we want to defend from others something that is dear to us, something that is very important to us. In human beings, physiological aggression is triggered whenever it is necessary to defend one's body, one's possessions, one's honour, one's family, the nation in which one lives, one's social status, one's

work or other property deemed essential or important, without being willing or able to entrust this defence to others or to the law.

This defence can also be activated simply by a *mental and emotional motive*, so it is by no means certain that it will result in violent action against others. Many animals achieve the goal of defending their territory, the food they have found or, even more importantly, their defenceless young by simply using behaviour to make intruders realise their readiness to actively defend themselves. Similarly, parents often threaten to punish their children with a glare or a particular tone of voice when they do not obey or behave inappropriately. Older siblings do the same when they want to intimidate their overbearing siblings.

We speak of pathological aggression when aggressive thoughts or behaviour disproportionate, persistent and manifested towards people or animals who have not caused us any physical or moral harm, nor have tried to take our property, nor had any intention of doing so. In the case of parents, pathological aggression is aggression that manifests itself towards their children with continuous and unjustified remonstrances, threats and punishments or words of discredit. In all of these cases, however, as we shall see below, something or someone has attacked, tormented and made the person or animal suffer in the past, so that the anger, which has erupted afterwards, is only apparently unmotivated.

Pathological aggression is also that directed towards oneself (*self-directed or centrifugal aggression*). In these cases the

Its destructive force is reflected and directed towards one's own body: the subject pulls out his hair, bites his hands, slaps his face, injures his arms, legs or other parts of his body and sometimes even goes so far as to kill himself.

The purposes self-directed or centrifugal aggression can be different:

- To communicate in the most dramatic way to those close to us the presence of relevant psychological problems or the intimate suffering felt at that time or in that phase of life.
- One blames oneself for real or presumed guilt; for actions, thoughts or behaviour that are deemed grossly unjust, foolish, inappropriate or inconsiderate. In such cases, the subject blames himself, accuses himself, hurts himself and risks a permanent loss of self-esteem, since he cannot find, or prefers not to find, an external goal on which to direct his discontent, while depressive symptoms and feelings of inferiority increase. When the ego can no longer manage these conflicts, the body may suffer, so that certain psychosomatic illnesses may manifest themselves, such as headaches, nausea, gastroenteritis, vomiting, etc., and the body may also be affected. In these cases, the immune defences may also decrease and, consequently, the onset of viral and bacterial diseases is facilitated.
- At other times, hurting oneself through physical pain serves to diminish or distract the subject's attention from the inner psychological suffering

experienced at that moment.

- In the most dramatic cases, one wants to completely eliminate physical or psychological suffering with one's death.

In all cases of pathological aggression, the more unmotivated, intense, frequent or destructive the aggressive thoughts or acts are, the more important and serious the psychological disorder may be. Therefore, the subject who reacts violently in an unjustified and, at least seemingly incomprehensible manner, both towards others and towards himself, requires special attention and appropriate care.

Manifestations of aggression

Rancour and resentment. Mulling over wrongs and offences for a long time leads to resentment and rancour. In some cases, the offended person, who has been robbed or injured in some way, cannot decide whether or not to take revenge, but still cannot forgive the offence received, so that the suffering for the wrong suffered is continually self-feeding. In these cases, the time spent only serves to find the best and most effective way to implement the repeatedly imagined retaliation.

Hostile aggression. Conversely, when aggression arises from an intense emotion of contempt, hatred, revenge or vengeance towards those who have harmed us and it manifests itself hotly, we have hostile aggression. Most murders fall into the category of hostile aggression. Approximately half of these occur because of quarrels, the rest for reasons of passion, use/abuse of alcohol and narcotics. The emotional nature of these murders makes us realise that the death penalty, which is still used in many countries, is not an effective instrument to

deter such crimes.

Powerlessness. Another path of aggression can lead to helplessness. In these cases, the subject is unable to react to the offence or damage suffered, so he tends to become depressed and withdraw into himself, displaying apathetic and tired behaviour. At the same time, he may complain of headaches, lack of appetite and tiredness. Hence, his aggressiveness is concealed behind whining, complaining and discouragement.

Sublimated aggression. The sublimation of aggression allows the transformation of aggressive energy into neutral energy available to the ego (Ajuriaguerra, 1993, p. 474).

The functions aggression

Aggression, depending on the various purposes, can be:

Predatory or instrumental. This is carried out in order to obtain something from others that could be useful or useful to us. It arises with the aim of overpowering the other in order to achieve certain goals and objectives: religious, political, sexual, economic, terrorist or conquering. Therefore, this type of aggression is oriented towards solving a problem or gaining an advantage. For these reasons, it is premeditated and not driven by anger.

Competitive. This takes place against other human beings or even animals or natural elements that hinder our needs or desires. For example, burning or destroying forests in order to plant rocks, or driving away animals and natives living in a territory rich in valuable minerals, in order to exploit them.

Defensive or reactive. It occurs when we engage in aggressive behaviour or attitudes when others demand, demand or may harm something that belongs to us, something that could be useful to us, our loved ones or the community to which we belong: an object, a love, a home, a role and so on. This type of aggression is frequently associated with feelings of anger and loss of emotional control.

Territorial. Aggression manifests itself to defend the community of we are part or a territory in which we live and from which we derive our livelihood.

Apparent. This is what happens when one hurts or physically or morally harms someone for fun, without meaning to or without being aware of it. Apparent aggression is very often found in fights between brothers or in fights between boys in backyards or on their parents' beds. Such behaviour is often simply intended to playful or to demonstrate and compare strength, agility, masculine power or courage. Apparent aggression is also present in children, when they break a toy to see what it looks like or to understand how it works. Apparent aggression is also present in children or the disabled when, in a clumsy way, in an excess of love, they clutch a chick or a small animal too tightly, to the point of hurting it, or when they use it to play, to discover, to learn and to understand how it is made, without, however, being aware that they are causing their poor victims pain, harm or even death.

physical or moral harm to other persons through carelessness, carelessness or excessive recklessness, without, however, having any negative feelings towards the victims.

All types of aggressive behaviour in both animals and humans are not present to the same extent and, depending on age, sex and experience, also differ between individuals of the same species.

Aggression in different periods of life

As we have said aggression can be present in every period of our lives. *"From an early age, the child is able to manifest his displeasure and even earlier his anger: indeed, there is a continuum between reactions to lack and frustration and the manifestation of more or less aggressive claims on those around him. (Ajuriaguerra and De Marcelli, 1986, p.183).*

However, we know that the reasons that trigger it are different, as are the ways in which it manifests itself. Age is important in conflict management Research shows that younger subjects score lower than more 'mature' ones. This suggests that competences related to the ability manage conflicts may be influenced, also on a neurobiological level, by the neural networks of the prefrontal brain areas that are completed after the age of twenty (Barberi, 2016, p. 39). These areas, let us remember, are involved in the planning of complex cognitive behaviour and the moderation of social conduct.

In infants, aggression mainly arises when habitual sequences are not respected, and parents do not com-

by not taking or not promptly responding to their child's needs, they do not deal with him in the ways and at the times that are usual and most congenial to him; or when the child feels, from the way he looks, from the way he is manipulated by his parents, that he is not an understood, accepted and loved child. In these cases he expresses his disappointment by clenching his fists, refusing food, spitting or biting the nipple.

In the two- to three-year-old child, anger and rage can arise when the child feels excessively freaked out, thwarted, frustrated in its needs and desires. For example, when he is frequently hindered in his need for movement; when he is blocked in his games or in the needs that he has and that are inherent in his needs for growth, for discovering the world and the objects around him; or when he is limited or blocked when he would like to exercise and show himself or others his abilities, his strength, his skill. In these and many other cases, aggression solves the task of making his parents understand his need to acquire strength, agility, but also greater freedom and autonomy. In other cases, however, aggression arises from the child's need to severely punish his or her parents for having distanced themselves from him or her for too long, leaving him or her prey to insecurity and fears. In still other cases, the irritated behaviour may be intended to make adults realise that the child needs to be listened to, cuddled and caressed.

The manifestations of a child's aggression can be very varied: some toddlers shout, stomp on feet, try to hit adults with fists and kicks or try to bite them; others prefer to vent their anger.

on objects in their hands, destroying them, or they refuse food, expel faeces and urine uncontrollably, and spit on the floor. At other times they may merely look resentfully and resentfully at people who stand in their way. Only older children are able to express their resentment in words of accusation.

The child who has considerable inner aggression, such as an autistic or very disturbed child, often alternates between aggressive and chaotic manifestations and behaviour in which he or she manifests the need to order and recompose.

Around the age of four, the child, if sufficiently mature for its age, expresses its aggression verbally, through its fantasies and games and no longer with gestures.

At school age, fits of rage are often due to the child's difficulties in relating well with peers, teachers, but also with learning and the many duties that school activities impose on him: doing homework, sitting attentively at the desk for too long, too much time, dealing with the stress of questions, being continually assessed, judged and so on. Moreover, also at this age, child easily recognises family disagreements but, unable to remedy them, sometimes gets angry at one or other parent, guilty of creating anxieties, insecurities and fears. In such cases he may also turn his anger towards himself, because for some reason he holds himself responsible for their disagreements or judges himself incapable of remedying them.

Also in the child, as in the adult, we find *immediate aggressive forms, deferred forms and socialised forms*

(Ajuriaguerra, 1993, p. 479). Although the manifestations of aggression in children are more intense and striking than those of adults, they are fortunately also more furious. Often the child, who does not have major psychological problems, will, after shouting and stamping his feet or kicking and punching his mother and father, immediately and easily take refuge in their arms, showing intense feelings of affection and love.

In adolescence, aggression can arise from various causes. One of the most frequent reasons the insecurity the adolescent feels when confronting other peers. Insecurity not only about the qualities of his or her body, but also about his or her personal intellectual, physical or moral qualities, as well as his or her seductive abilities towards the opposite sex. Other reasons aggressive behaviour and feelings are linked to the need he has to assert his autonomy, vis-à-vis his parents and adults in general. Fortunately, these particular aggressive emotions of adolescents are often channelled into sporting activities or schoolwork. Adolescents direct their fits of anger and rage not only at their parents, by whom they feel their needs for autonomy and freedom are not understood, but also at their classmates, when they do not feel respected, and at their friends, when they feel betrayed by them. Because he understands that by physically hurting others, the punishment could be very severe, he often prefers to turn his aggression towards objects: he breaks dishes, kicks furniture, slams doors.

Adult aggression arises, as we shall see, from multiple factors and manifests itself mainly on a verbal level

but sometimes, unfortunately, the physical manifestations are also evident and striking.

Aggression in the elderly. Conflicts and aggressive behaviour are also present in old age. In women, this is caused by anxiety, stress and easy irritability, the major hormonal changes that occur during the menopause, but also and above all the fear of various signs ageing in the body: wrinkles, skin blemishes, inelastic tissue, increased fat and other imperfections. If, psychologically speaking, men are less anxious about their appearance, they are more affected and worried by the greater difficulties they may have in the sexual and working spheres. In both sexes, dissatisfaction can be accentuated during this period, due to a negative assessment of one's life, which encourages one to try to make up for lost time. Therefore, both sexes in modern societies tend to indulge in new adventures and new love and sexual relationships, leading to crises and the breaking of previous ties.

Aggression in the two sexes

Men and women experience aggression for different causes and reasons. Moreover, the management and manifestations of aggression are also at least partly related sexual gender.

Reactions to frustrations. These differ according to one's personal sensitivity and inner experiences, but also differ with respect to the greater or lesser expectations of the two sexes. Women are more affected by frustrations when these are related to sentimental aspects

relationship and the care and education of children, while men suffer more from the frustrations experienced in the social, work and sexual spheres.

Hormonal variability. A greater or lesser irritable and aggressive attitude and behaviour is linked, in both sexes, to *hormonal variability*. As this variability is greater and more pronounced in the female sex, due to the presence of the menstrual cycle, a greater irritable and aggressive attitude and behaviour is present in women in the pre-menstrual period, whereas, on the contrary, greater acceptance and better management of irritating and belligerent impulses is prevailing in the pre-ovulatory and ovulatory period.

Expressions of aggression. The observation of children in spontaneous play situations makes it possible to verify how males prefer forms of play and interaction with a higher aggressive content (Slepoj, 2005, p. 137). Despite the fact that, in both sexes, with increasing age and maturity, there is a marked decrease in the use of physical manifestations of aggression, when these are present they manifest themselves more in males. In addition, when they are particularly angry, males tend to use their bodies to defend or offend, rather than words, by kicking, punching, shoving, spitting, slapping or, in extreme cases, using actual bloody weapons.

In females, the lower physical strength, but also the lower amount of testosterone in the circulation, forces them to use non-bodily instruments to defend themselves and attack. Women therefore, when irritated or provoked, prefer to rely on language to attack and hurt.

verbal, by means of insulting phrases; or they resort to moral abuse, refusing dialogue or emotional and sexual manifestations. To these behaviours may be added, in the most serious cases, the physical removal and exclusion of the other person from their home, their life, their children and their family or friendship group, as well as the implementation of a series of legal and moral instruments designed to cause the greatest psychological, economic and social damage to the person towards whom they feel aggression and resentment.

When in extreme cases, fortunately rare, women are determined to physically harm or even kill their partner, persecutor or enemy, they prefer to use non-bloody means, such as poison. In other cases, in order to physically eliminate the hated person, they seek the support of other men such as their father, brothers, lover or new partner.

Another fundamental difference relates to *communicating to other people or to the judicial authorities* about the violence suffered, in order to ask for punishment, help or compensation. Whereas males have a considerable resistance to communicate, confess and admit that they have been assaulted or harassed by women, because they fear that their image as a strong, virile man will be compromised; women, on the other hand, are much more likely to feel the need, sometimes even years later, to point out any violent or harassing behaviour and attitudes they have suffered, in order to take revenge, to be pitied or to seek protection and acceptance in the hearts of others.

With regard to the persons subjected to aggression, whereas physical violence by males is expressed mainly towards other adult males and women, physical aggression by females is manifested mainly towards young children or other minors who, due to their characteristics, are mostly incapable of active defence.

Expressions aggression

Aggression can be expressed in various ways.

Indirect aggression

In such cases, the person to be targeted is attacked obliquely. Backbiting, slander, irony, insinuations and disparaging criticism are used to hurt them, with the aim of putting them in a bad light, belittling their qualities or trying to blame them.

Shifting aggression

Aggressive manifestations are not always directed against the person or persons who provoked them. There are some people whom it is very difficult to hate, let alone attack, as this behaviour could lead to inner conflict, intense feelings of guilt or personal or social damage. Therefore, aggression is transferred to a safer and more socially acceptable target. In such cases, not being able or not knowing how to react adequately, ends up taking out one's anger not on the actual object that provoked it, e.g. one's parents, the boss or the important person does not have the courage or is not convenient to confront, but on a

less fearsome and more easily attainable target, which serves as a scapegoat.

This target may from time to time be one's husband or wife, children, teachers or people of a different colour, language, ethnicity: foreigners, immigrants, Roma, etc. Objects and animals can also suffer the consequences of dyslogistical aggression. For this reason, the mistreatment of animals can often also lead to future episodes of violence towards people (Bèque, 2014, p.89). For Hacker (1971, p. 147): 'Aggression that one does not dare to show towards the stronger is vented against the weaker. One shouts at one's children because one has taken a rant from the office manager without having had the courage to answer him in kind'.

Removal aggression

Aggression can be removed in the unconscious by the super-ego to avoid conflict with environment. However, excess unconscious repressed aggression can, in turn, generate anguish that tends to vent and discharge itself in an explosive and regressive manner (Hacker, 1971, p. 147). And again the same author (Hacker, 1971, p. 148):

"The desired control of aggression that is achieved by manipulating anguish with punishments and threats can, through and because of anguish, become the motive and cause of aggression. Anguish leads to removal; excessive removal produces uncontrolled anguish, which is manipulated by apathy, by explosive aggression, by a combination of lethargy and anxiety or by continuous resentment and neurotic symptoms.".... "Depending on the circumstances, then,

anxiety or controls aggression, inhibits it or discharges it'.

The dissociation aggression

Another form of aggressive reaction is the dissociation described by Freud. In these cases, a hidden part of the personality denies that the aggressive event really happened, while, at the same time, another part of the personality continues to believe it.

Anger and rage

In both sexes, the most conspicuous manifestations of aggression are *anger and rage*. As far as the distinction between anger and rage is concerned, the former is an emotion, whereas rage is the behaviour resulting from this emotion. Therefore, one feels anger and one acts in an angry manner. When we judge the sustained prevaricating, frustrating or aggressive behaviour of others towards us as totally unacceptable, the survival instinct triggers intense angry emotions that erupt into sudden, overwhelming and striking manifestations of anger.

Anger mobilises all the physical energies needed to defend oneself, threaten and strike at one's enemy or adversary. In such cases, the body is placed in a position of defence and offence, tense and ready to spring into action and start a fight to eliminate or render the opponent harmless. To achieve this, during the whole time of the emotional reaction, the glands are stimulated, leading to the production of adrenal and noradrenalin hormones, which cause an increase in the blood pressure.

blood pressure and heart rate. In this way, the entire body is ready to cope with the extraordinary and imminent energy demand.

This primal reaction is visibly manifested by changes in the face, posture, tone and intensity of the voice. In these cases, the face, sometimes red, in other cases clearly purple, is upset by the typical angry expression: the mouth, teeth and hands, clenched due to increased muscular tension, are ready to attack, bite or hit the person or persons who are considered to be threatening opponents. The bloodshot eyes also communicate blame and a desire for repression and violence to the person in front of them, so that they know they are ready to attack. Pi- cozzi (2012, p. 29) describes it as follows: *'The subject who experiences it presents himself with lowered, close-set eyebrows, vertical wrinkles, fixed gaze, lowered upper eyelids, tight lips with straight or lowered corners, tense muscles, clenched fists'.*

Anger is most intense when we attribute to the other person the will to hurt, when we have the feeling that the person who makes us feel bad is committing an abuse or a lack of respect towards us.

A blind irrationality is often present in the angry reaction of both children and adults. This prompts behaviour that would hardly be carried out in a situation of inner calm and serenity. The child, for example, punches and almost wants to and desires the elimination and destruction of the obstacle in the way of the exhaustion of his or her desire, even in moments of anger.

This is even more the case if it is a person who is crucial and much loved for him at the time, such as a parent. The adult is also prompted to utter phrases and words and make gestures that he later bitterly regrets, as he considers them to be absolutely disproportionate and inappropriate.

Unfortunately, in this particular condition, the mind, blinded by hatred and the need to harm, only aims to choose the best strategy of defence or offence, disregarding the consequences of the aggressive acts that are about to take place. For this reason, our rational capacities are so impaired that we are unable to explain our reasons clearly at a later point in time. Moreover, overwhelmed by resentment, we overestimate the offences and negative behaviour, attitudes and characteristics of the other person, while vastly underestimating the positive ones. Ultimately, caught up in anger, we fall prey to a destructive, but sometimes even self-destructive spiral. Only later, when serenity has been restored, do we repent for what was desired, uttered and manifested in those moments. However, anger is not only a negative expression to be erased; it is also a response to a threat, to frustration, and helps us fight for our safety, providing us with the emotional and physical energy to solve a problem (Picozzi, 2012, p. 29).

Both the emotions anger and its manifestations diminish considerably when we manage to discharge them on the person who provoked them. Only then, when we respond and discharge our aggression by attacking the person we perceive as a source of psychological threat and

Because of our severe discomfort, the tension diminishes and we find a state of momentary and partial well-being. When this is not possible or not convenient, these emotions and manifestations can be directed at animals, people or absolutely innocent things.

Therefore, aggressive manifestations produce, at least momentarily, pleasant and gratifying feelings. We have emphasised at least momentarily, because, at a later stage, 'with a cool head', we often feel ashamed of what we have said and done and, being able to retrace our steps, we would in many cases cancel or modify many of our acts provoked and managed by anger.

Of course the negative stimuli that triggered the anger are important, but the brain that processes these stimuli is also important. For this reason, each person reacts in his or her own particular way to negative and stressful stimuli from the outside world, depending on his or her personality and experiences at the time. Therefore, both anger and the manifestations of anger have considerable subjective characteristics.

Manifestations of anger

Uninhibited anger manifests itself immediately after an unpleasant event in an explosive manner, whereas *inhibited anger* or *silent anger*, as Meazzini (2006, p. 8) calls it, accumulates over time, is likely to turn into icy, implacable hatred and can only be expressed violently in outbursts of anger at a later time. The latter type of anger is especially present in people who are very attentive to formal respect or the negative reactions of others. This-

Some people manage to keep their anger at bay or mask and inhibit it for a longer or shorter period of time, in order not to buy their image. However, this violent emotion does not disappear and accumulates in the soul, until the individual is no longer able contain it. When the tension reaches too high a level, it erupts acted-out and decomposed anger, sometimes even over minor offences. In short, in these apparently controlled people, it is the straw that breaks the camel's back.

With regard to intensity, anger can be characterised in many gradations. Meazzini (2006, pp. 10-11) reports the scale of Potter Efron R. and Potter Efron P. who distinguish various levels of anger:

1. In the first level, anger is expressed in an apparently serene and calm manner.
2. On the second level, the person who feels justifiably hurt or offended ignores the other person and answers his or her questions with a prolonged silence. As if to say: 'I am very annoyed with you, leave me alone'.
3. In the third level, the offended person tries to make other person feel guilty and ashamed for what they have done to them.
4. In the fourth level, there are quarrels with shouting and insults towards each other.
5. In the fifth level, real threats are thrown at each other.
6. In the sixth, real acts of persecution are carried out.

7. In the seventh level, there is controlled violence in which a glimmer of rationality remains.
8. In the eighth level, the most severe, is the so-called *blind rage*, which is also the most primitive. In this condition, every glimmer of rationality disappears.

The consequences of anger

If manifestations of aggression are rare and are prompted by serious reasons, they have a positive function in that they serve to protect us from the abuse of others. If, on the other hand, they show themselves frequently or excessively, they are a serious detriment to the individual, others and society and should be a wake-up call for those close to them. They should be able to understand real and deeper causes of such outbursts and find the most useful remedies.

Although aggressive manifestations sometimes produce pleasure and gratification, they are not only addictive like most narcotics but are not as harmless to the body as is sometimes thought. The body, subjected to a constant and considerable state of alertness, is in danger of suffering negative repercussions, especially in the cardiovascular system. In addition, the individual will inevitably be forced to face the often very serious consequences of his aggressive behaviour: loss of relationships with peers and the opposite sex; feelings of guilt and unworthiness. In addition, he will be forced to answer for his acts in the legal and social arena.

VIOLENCE

Violence is defined as any act of oppression exercised over individuals by physical or psychological means. Violent acts include all attitudes and actions of those who, by force or threat, force someone, group or a community to do something or prevent them from doing something, in such a way as to bring about deprivation, harm or psychological damage. Or it causes physical injury or even death to the individual or individuals towards whom the violent act is exercised. Violence can arise from a conscious or unconscious stimulus and can therefore be either voluntary or involuntary. 'Violence' is an analogous term to 'violate' in the sense of defile, go against, transgress (Ajuriaguerra, 1995, p. 9). For Hacker (1971, p. 115), violence is basically the crude, vulgar and primitive form of aggression. For this author, violence is always aggression, but not always aggression is

violence. However, any manifestation of aggression is preferable to violence.

Certain forms of violence are provoked by a feeling of injustice. "If I have suffered, it is only right that those who have caused my suffering should also suffer". However, as Hacker (1971, p. 118) says: *'Only if aggression as a whole and in all its nuances and manifestations has been recognised and accepted does it no longer need to disguise itself. Only if aggression no longer has to change its label, no longer has to hide or deny its existence, will it be able to choose alternatives to manifest itself in the service of life and happiness, it will no longer be forced to regress to violence, becoming the bearer of destruction and death'*.

The term *domestic violence* refers to any form of physical, psychological or sexual violence that affects those who have had or propose to have an intimate relationship. This term also refers to people who live within a more or less extended family unit and to those who have a relationship of a relative or emotional nature. Unfortunately, it is precisely the bond of affection and blood that makes the home and the family in its broadest sense the privileged place where violence is most frequently exercised, so much so that domestic violence accounts for 75 per cent of abuse and affects mainly married couples and cohabitees. As far as these people are concerned, one of the most dangerous periods is when they decide to separate or go through separation. The reason is easy to understand. Those periods are, a psychological point of view, certainly the most tense and full of tension, resentment and hatred towards the other spouse, partner or fiancé.

As far as the term *gender-based violence* is concerned, one would like to limit this term to violent acts that entail or are likely to entail physical, sexual or psychological suffering or any form of suffering for women. This limitation to the female sex is not at all correct, since violence is a transversal phenomenon, and therefore in no way attributable to the female gender alone. It is quite clear that not only males can be victims of violence, but also the bearers of other sexual genders: such as male and female homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, hermaphrodites and so on.

Physical violence (*Vis absoluta*)

This is the extemporaneous or protracted violent action directed at the other person's body with the intention of hurting or even permanently damaging, if not killing him/her. Physical violence may be carried out against *the body* with slaps, punches, kicks, etc., or *through the use of poisons, weapons or other objects* that are capable of causing pain or injury to the other person's body.

Psychological violence (*compulsive vis*)

It is the action aimed not at harming the other person's body but his or her psyche, seeking to damage or destroy his or her psychological well-being, inner serenity, self-esteem, social, friendship or family image. In these cases, there is a desire to subjugate and heavily condition the life of the other person. Psychological violence is difficult to see and diagnose; its boundaries are unclear and ill-defined; its gradualness varies greatly; and the causes that can determine the violence are very different.

undermine it are manifold. For these reasons, its evaluation, in law but also on ethical and moral grounds, is particularly complex and elusive and lends itself to various interpretations and many *distinctions*. Moreover, it varies greatly over time and is different in different states and human and religious communities.

As far as behaviour is concerned, psi- logical violence can be realised by means of:

- *Threats*. For example: 'If you don't do what I tell you, I will take your children away and you will never see them again'; 'If you leave home, I will take all your money and leave you in your underwear'; 'If you don't let me do what I ask, I will kill you, I will socially persecute you, I will tell everyone what you are made of'. Threats may also include the threat of suicide. This threat, as one can well understand, is extremely serious, as it can trigger deliberate feelings of guilt in the victim.
- *Excessive or absurd prohibitions*. For example: 'Don't ever leave the house without my permission'; 'If you go to your parents' I will leave you'; 'Woe betide you if you hang out with those friends of yours'.
- *Excessive blaming without a valid reality check*. E.g.: 'It is your fault that we are broke'; 'It is your fault that our son takes drugs'; 'You are responsible for the heart attack I suffered'.
- *Denigration and devaluation*. In these cases one verbally attacks the other with derogatory phrases, trying to belittle their personal dignity, their work, their psyche, their body, their abilities and their role as

mother or father, as husband or wife: 'You are a no-good'; 'You are a nobody'; 'You are a moron/ a creti-

no'; 'You are not a real man'; 'You have nothing of a real woman'; 'You are a nutcase'. At other times, they use philia to attack and humiliate the other person, inciting them to refuse any contact with their parent. In some cases, sarcasm is used to criticise the other person in order to denigrate them in the eyes of children, friends and other family members. In these cases, biting, only apparently witty jokes are used in the presence of others. However, the purpose is clear and obvious: in order to make more , one pokes one's partner in front of everyone, also in the hope that the others will give one's partner a helping hand against the aggressor. Naturally, such behaviour can lead to a loss of self-esteem.

- *Control over the other.* In order to have more control over the other, one may try in every way to discourage his or her every initiative, with the intention of subjugating him or her to oneself. In such cases, one of the two takes the upper hand and decides what the partner 'must' wear, the people he or she can or cannot associate with, and so on.
- *Isolation.* This violence consists of trying to make the other dependent on oneself by trying to isolate him/her. For example, they are prevented from working, from accessing personal or communal finances, from seeing or maintaining relationships with friends and family.
- *Indifference.* Treating the other person as if he or she did not exist can also cause much suffering: not talking to him or her; not letting him or her participate in the life of the family; ignoring his or her needs; refusing to dialogue with him or her.

- *Affective and sexual blackmail.* For example: 'If you don't buy me a mink coat, you can forget about touching me even with one finger'. "If you don't want me to buy a new car, I won't pay for the surgery you should perform".
- *Economic violence.* In these cases, the violent person tries to diminish the economic independence of the other person in such a way that he/she does not have sufficient assets and financial means to live with dignity. For instance, attempts are made to take the other person's salary; the other person is excluded from all decisions on the financial management of the family; the other person is forced to sign documents against the other person in order to appropriate the other person's assets; or important purchases are made without consulting the other person.
- *Cultural and religious violence.* This type of violence occurs when one does not respect the culture or religious and moral convictions of the other.
- *Sexual violence.* Sexual violence is committed in various situations. For example, sexually harassing the other person; forcing the other person to engage in humiliating, painful or totally undesirable sexual behaviour; enjoying sexual jokes and teasing; imposing pregnancies, abortions or forcing the other person to prostitute him- or herself; interrupting a sexual act without good reason.
- *Violence with the use of intense and asphyxiating modes of contact (stalking).* This type of violence makes use of telephone calls, anonymous letters, stalking, written or audiovisual messages on social

networks. The most

frequent is to try, by means of threats, to persuade the other person to retrace his or her steps, so that he or she may once again be willing to resume a romantic or sexual relationship that was interrupted, in a manner deemed unjust and unjustified, at least in the view of the stalker. By such means, the stalker tries to put awe, fear and anxiety into the targeted person, in order to his or her goal(s). In stalking, this can go as far as actual aggressive conduct, with material damage to the victim's property (Loretto *et al.*, 2004, p. 62- 68). This person, desired or detested by the stalker, may belong to the affective-relational microcosm of the subject and may therefore be an ex: spouse, fiancé, cohabitant, lover, friend, but may also be a neighbour with whom there has never been any important relationship, a professional or even some famous TV, film or song personality, such as an actor, actress, model, sportsman or politician. In Italy, there are approximately 547 reports of stalking every month and eighteen arrests every day (Di Maria and Formica, 2011). Stalking or harassment can be carried out for various reasons: difficulty accepting rejection; inability to cope with the psychological consequences of abandonment; a state of unacceptable loneliness that stimulates the search for a person to love, with whom to have emotional or sexual relations. In short, the person who is dissatisfied with his or her own demands feels a strong need to insist abnormally and excessively, in the hope that his or her needs will be met. In some cases, however,

Those who engage in this type of behaviour seek by various means to punish the person who refuses their approaches or wishes to take revenge, because of some wrong suffered or imagined.

- *Carelessness and negligence.* In these cases, the person commits violence by not sufficiently caring for the person who needs his or her help.
- *Exploitation.* This violence occurs when, for example, adults are forced into prostitution or minors are forced to engage in excessive fashion, advertising or competitions, with negative consequences on their physical or psychological development.
- *Family mobbing.* Just as there is mobbing at work, where employers or other colleagues harass employees in a hostile and prolonged manner, so too there can be mobbing within the family, with the building of pathological alliances. For instance, when one spouse allies against the other, using particular forms of moral violence towards the latter: not speaking to him/her, ridiculing his/her every behaviour, word or gesture, and so on. In other cases, bullying can be carried out by depriving the other person of any opportunity to express him/herself; mocking his/her weaknesses; making unkind allusions to him/her without making them explicit; questioning his/her judgement and decision-making abilities etc. '... so that in the end, the person who suffers this particular form of mental cruelty sees the light go out, his/her soul becomes darker and darker, torn and devastated. (Di Maria and Formica, 2006).

- *Excessive jealousy.* Jealousy, if excessive and thus pathological, also entails a major restriction of the other person's freedom, who will find it difficult to move, act and even work.

All acts of psychological violence are basically a surrogate for physical aggression, since they still manage to hurt the other person, without feeling guilty or being able to be accused of having caused easily detectable organic damage.

In some cases, violence may alternate with periods, of varying length, in which, after repentance and acceptance of the victim's apology, reconciliation, gentleness and acquiescence prevail in the couple. However, after some time, a new phase of tension may follow and a new conflict erupts, with further expressions of violence and aggression. A whole series of psychological consequences can occur as a result of the violence: anxiety, fear, confusion, difficulty in concentrating, shame, loss of self-esteem with self-guilt, feelings of failure and helplessness, depression, social isolation, loss of work, difficulties in external relations, loss of friendly contacts and so on (Roberto, 2016).

The frequency and severity of violent acts do not always correlate with the severity of the conflict or opposition they encounter. A *conflict deficiency* may be present, understood as a lack of those personal and social components that allow us to perceive the critical context as sustainable and not as a threat or danger (Barberi, 2016, p. 38). The person with severe conflictual deficiency mani-

violent behaviour even in the absence of particular tensions and without following the logic of *escalation*. Generally, very little is needed, even a limited and partial hint of con- trity - a misunderstood word or attitude - to trigger reactions that appear totally out of step social norms, but which are perfectly compatible with his deficits, his frailties' (Barberi, 2016, p. 38).

Violence in the two sexes

This is a particularly difficult but also controversial topic. In recent years, accusations of violence have almost always been applied to men, while women have almost always been seen as victims. In reality, as we shall see by examining the data in our possession, things are more complex.

Violence against women

In the 2014 ISTAT research on violence against women, the following data are reported:

31.5 per cent of 16-70-year-olds (6 million 788 thousand) have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime: 20.2 per cent (4 million 353 thousand) have experienced physical violence, 21 per cent (4 million 520 thousand) sexual violence, 5.4 per cent (1 million 157 thousand) the most serious forms of sexual violence such as rape (652 thousand) and attempted rape (746 thousand).

13.6 per cent of women (2,800,000) were physically or sexually assaulted by a partner or ex-partner, 5.2 per cent (855,000) by a current partner and 18.9 per cent (2,000,000) by an ex-partner.

44,000) by their ex-partner. The majority of the women who had a violent partner in the past left him/her because of the violence (68.6 %). In particular for 41.7 per cent it was the main cause to break off the relationship, for 26.8 per cent it was an important element of the decision.

24.7 per cent of the women experienced at least one physical or sexual violence by non-partnered men: 13.2 per cent by strangers and 13 per cent by people they knew. Specifically, 6.3% by acquaintances, 3% by friends, 2.6% by relatives and 2.5% by work colleagues.

In 2017, the number of women victims of voluntary homicide in Italy was 123, or 0.40 per 100,000 women. Source Istat.

Violence against men

Macrì *et al.*, in a 2012 survey of 1058 male subjects aged 18 to 70, reported numerous types of violence perpetrated on them by women.

Physical violence

- Physical violence enacted in a typically female manner with scratching, biting, tearing hair: 60.5 % of respondents.
- Throwing of objects: 51.2%
- Beatings with kicks and punches: 58.1% of respondents.
- Assault on one's personal safety that could have led to death: 8.4% of the interviewed.
- Use of own and improper weapons: 23.5% of those surveyed.

Psychological violence

The percentage of women who globally insult, humiliate and cause distress with words is high: 75.4 per cent of the interventions. In particular:

- Threat of physical violence: 61.1% of the respondents.
- contempt/disdain (30.5%) of the respondents.
- mocking comparisons (20.1%) of respondents.
- Humiliation with regard to the economic aspect and criticism due to poorly paid employment: 50.8% of respondents.
- Humiliation and insults in public 66.1% of the interventions.
- Criticism and insults to relatives: 72.4% of respondents.
- Criticism for physical defects: 29.3% of respondents.
- Criticism for clothing and appearance in general: 49.1% of respondents.
- Criticism of home and child management: 61.4% of respondents.

Sexual violence

- With regard to sexual violence, only 2.2% of the men stated that they had never experienced any kind of sexual violence. The highest percentage of this type of violence reported by men, which was 48.7 per cent of the respondents, concerned intimate relations initiated but then interrupted by the partner for no understandable reason. This behaviour made them feel humiliated and depressed: "The range of reported complaints ranged from physical discomfort,

insomnia; from the mortification of feeling rejected to the doubt of no longer being desired; from the fear of not being able to satisfy one's partner to the doubt that she had previously simulated a desire and pleasure that one had never felt; from the doubt of betrayal to the feeling of inadequacy; from the fear for the stability of the couple to the decline in the number of people in the relationship; from the fear of not being able to satisfy one's partner to the fear that one's partner had previously simulated a desire and pleasure that one had never felt; from the fear of being betrayed to the feeling of inadequacy; from the fear for the stability of the couple to the decline in the number of people in the relationship.

self-esteem, etc." A wide range of consequences were not always resolved independently, but in some cases required specialist care, support and analysis.

Respondents also reported other types of sexual violence, in smaller percentages, such as:

- the use of coercion, through force or threat (8.6%).
- sexual intercourse in forms they do not like (e.g. sado-masochistic intercourse, intercourse during the sexual period, sexual intercourse with other people, included group sex or couple exchange) (4.1%).

For the authors (Magrì et al. 2012, p. 30):

"It is to be noted that surveys, polls and research that analyse this deviant behaviour and that have been continuously promoted at institutional and media level for

decades have usually only taken into consideration the fact that the victim of gender-based violence is a woman and the perpetrator is a man. This information, distorted at its origin, is passed on through official channels (from the media to prevention campaigns) resulting in a consequent one-way awareness-raising that relegates to exceptions -

often not even considered - the assumptions that violence can be suffered and/or acted upon by members of both sexes'.

Violence against men is particularly difficult to detect, as it is also affected by the greater or lesser propensity of men to point out the violence they have suffered, due to their sexual characteristics, but also due to their greater or lesser propensity to open up about particularly delicate and intimate relational contents. This is the reason for the analysis of a phenomenon that, by its nature, is often submerged (Macrì *et al.*, 2012, p. 32). Despite the constant efforts of the media, institutions and a large part of the private social sector to condemn violence, it is labelled as gender-based violence, i.e. violence of men against women, forgetting the assumption that violence is a broad and complex construct that does not make any quantitative distinctions at all with regard to gender, but only qualitative ones. For many journalists, the violent *act* does not have its own characteristics, but seems to become blameworthy depending on the perpetrator. The message is therefore conveyed that female violence does not exist, and if it does, it is 'mild' and in any case does not cause alarm, and is legitimised, normalised, positive, as it is due to the woman's reactions to bullying. Often the man who suffers female violence does not get any sympathy from either sex, but is mocked and blamed as weak and incapable, for not being able to defend himself adequately.

Environmental and personal variables

Reactivity to a stimulus is never equal. The subject when serene and satisfied may react well to intense negative stimuli. Conversely, at certain times and in particular conditions of fatigue, stress, anxiety and frustration, they may react badly to even the slightest stimulus. For example, it is more likely that the individual who has experienced a day in which his or her basic physiological needs - sleep, rest, food - have not been met will react badly than the person who has been deprived for a long time of those minimal gratifications and satisfactions normally present in every man's life.

Whether or not it is easy to react with resounding and sometimes violent reactions also depends very much on *individual responsiveness*. Some people who are more serene, well-balanced and capable of rationality and emotional control accept and tolerate even very intense stimuli and react to provocations in a gradual and proportional manner, while others react more frequently and/or excessively even to trivial irritating stimuli. These people always find something in the words and gestures of others that affects them unfairly. They are called 'touchy', as they easily and frequently feel hurt and beaten up for sometimes trivial, if not entirely insignificant reasons, to which they react with bitterness, ruminating resentment and revenge. This easy irritability depends on the subject's personal and family history. A greater reactivity is present in persons who have been subjected for a long time to a family environment that is frequently conflictual or severely anxious, depressed, irritating and essentially unsuitable for the development of a child.

The state of debilitation caused by physical weakness and frailty, which turns into a state of psychological weakness and frailty, should not be underestimated. Therefore, the following are precursors to fits of rage: illnesses, especially chronic illnesses; particularly painful, difficult and uncertain surgical operations; hospitalisations; and the intake of certain drugs that considerably increase the subject's irritability and excitability, such as antihistamines, cortisone, antidepressants and others.

Choleric reactions diminish with age and have less impact in more educated people, who try to deal with disagreements in a more rational way. They are more frequent in the first years of marriage and decrease over time.

Victim behaviour

Although, at least in theory, all acts of violence should be prosecuted, they are not always reported by the victims. This happens for various reasons:

- Many people who are unable to metabolise crimes, lack the ability to forgive, and are certain of the slowness of justice and the lack of objectivity of the judges' sentences, tend to prepare and implement their own justice through personal revenge. In these cases, resentment is held and nurtured within the soul, waiting for the right moment to explode. The victim, sometimes for days, sometimes for months and years, prepares, organises and studies each of the adversary's weak points, in order to answer 'tit for tat' to those who have harmed them. This can be done in a direct way,

or by using friends, relatives or other extra- neous persons. The propitious moment may occur even after years, but the revengeful person is in no hurry since 'revenge is a dish best eaten cold'. Moreover, the evil first imagined and then carried out against the offender is reciprocated 'with interest' since, compared to that received, it is increased, accentuated and aggravated by the contained anger. However, although the need for revenge is natural, since it is present in humans but also in animals, it certainly does not make one feel better. On the contrary, it has the effect of a corrosive acid and can lead to depression, stress, malaise and permanent tension (Etienne Mullet, 2015). As Losacco (2010, p. 34) puts it: 'The all-out defence of oneself leads progressive emotional detachment and continuous destructive actions against the other. Distrust and distress lead to stiffening and such inflexibility that both partners are unable to come to an agreement. Conflict in these cases becomes destructive: intimacy, the emotional relationship, self-esteem and security are stifled to the point of vanishing.

- Some, on the other hand, refrain from avenging what they have suffered because they fear that revealing the violence they have suffered may endanger their own safety and that of their children.
- In other cases, there is the fear of some retaliation or of being abandoned by the partner.
- Frequent in men is shame or fear of being humiliated by others, especially by other males. As in: "Is it possible that you, big and

Big as you are, you can't defend yourself against a female?"

- In other cases, one fears mockery and accusations friends and especially family members for making the wrong choices: 'Would you look at that! The wonderful great love of your life turned out to be a disaster? How stupid you were to have chosen to be with the guy we all advised you against dating! And now, worse for you! You're on your own!'
- At other times, because of the strong bond that can go as far as psychological dependence on the perpetrator, one prefers to acquiesce and forgive while waiting for better times: 'Hopefully, his behaviour will improve in the future'; or one's own responsibility is emphasised: 'I too am at fault, perhaps I should behave better to prevent these things from happening. I deserve the beatings he gave me. I should not have played the fool with his friends'.
- Out of a sense helplessness and inability to ask for help.
- Because the violent behaviour of the other is considered normal. "She could not do otherwise, since with my words and behaviour I humiliated her in front of her friends".
- To safeguard the honour of the family and children.
- For lack of knowledge of one's rights.

Consequences for minors

Per Ackerman (1968, p. 32):

"The way in which parents characteristically show their love for each other and for their children is of great importance in determining the emotional climate of the family. Conflict generates hostile tension which, if not diminished, threatens the disorganisation of the family. When parents love each other, the child loves both parents; when parents hate each other, the child is forced to take a stand for one or the other. This arouses fear, since he must be prepared to lose the love of the parent he rejects in favour of the other'.

Many conflict parents frequently fail to cooperate and coordinate with each other in bringing up their children. Often they do not even try to come to an understanding with each other. On the contrary, one tries to disqualify, limit and block the credibility of the other, belittling every initiative, and every sentence uttered by the latter, almost as if pleased to be able to question and challenge every directive and rule proposed or dictated by the other spouse.

Children cannot remain indifferent when they perceive clear and obvious signs of conflict around them or, worse, notice slow behaviour between parents. The world of children, at least in the first years of life, is limited to their own home and their parents. That is why it is different from the adult world, which is wide, because it is made up of numerous complex family, friendship and professional relationships. Therefore, for that small environment, the 'nest' of human beings, to allow a healthy development of children, it is essential that it is warm and tender, but also safe, serene and peaceful.

When this does not happen, so that man's children feel frequent conflicts, coldness and aggressiveness around them, their whole being suffers, upset by the tension that surrounds them. This prevents or alters, sometimes mildly, but more often severely, their normal psychic development. It is not easy for a fragile, weak and insecure being such as a child to live and develop properly in the midst of suspicion, conflict or in a family in everyone goes their own way, looking for their own return, without the agreement and direction that is indispensable for children to understand, adapt to and cope with internal and external realities.

Some children, in order not to hear or somehow to escape the shouting and the unbearably violent atmosphere in the house, lock themselves in their rooms; they put headphones in their ears and turn up the music in an attempt to protect themselves, isolating themselves. Others leave the house or prefer to stay with their grandparents. Still others try to cover their parents' screams by shouting in turn.

The consequences from which children subjected to a conflictual and violent environment will suffer depend on: their age; their gender; the duration and severity of the events they are forced to witness; their greater or lesser capacity to understand the causes of the conflict, but also their pre-existing psychological situation. As is easy to understand, younger children react worse than older ones, since their younger age makes them easier prey to fears, anxieties, insecurities, but also guilt. Adolescents also react very badly to parental conflicts, since in this particularly delicate developmental phase, they are more likely to be the prey of fears, anxieties, insecurities and guilt.

difficult to cope with, such new and important problems added to their already very complicated growth path alter their poor and fragile balance.

Witnessing non-constructive ways resolving parental clashes may increase the likelihood of acquiring and generating, in turn, ineffective methods of conflict resolution, developing lower social skills and distorted beliefs about the legitimacy and normality of aggressive behaviour.

vi. However, when parents are able to discuss serenely and resolve conflicts constructively, this can help their children learn appropriate strategies solving problems in emotional relationships. In addition, the constructive resolution of a conflict can serve the couple itself to grow and strengthen its bond.

In addition to the suffering caused by the trauma of witnessing the clashes between their nearest and dearest, children can also suffer the damage caused by emotional and educational deficiencies. In fact, the conflict decreases physical and emotional availability, but also attention and care for the children, as parents are not only busy and engaged in this internecine war, but are also psychologically distraught: they therefore do not have the time, serenity and availability to take good care of their children.

Moreover, as their parenting style often becomes more nervous, aggressive, severe and intolerant, remorse and punishment of children increases. In other cases, on the contrary, it is possible for one of the parents to create pathological alliances with the children towards whom he or she will, as a consequence,

a series of permissive and yielding behaviour. When one of the parents tries to impose his or her own style of education and training, setting aside that of the other, the latter, frustrated and tired, withdraws from his or her training and educational tasks and shifts his or her attention, affection and gratification to other activities or other sentimental and sexual relationships. In such cases, it is clear that the children will be deprived of the attention, the dialogue, the tenderness, the listening, of one of the parents.

Usually this parent is the father , under current laws, is marginalised in educational duties. However, in some particular situations, children are deprived of both parental contributions, since even emotionally shaken and stressed mothers have considerable difficulty in relating to their children in a serene and balanced manner.

Another serious problem concerning children of conflict parents is that they are forced to choose which parent to love and which one to hate and therefore cast out of their minds. All this, however, to the detriment of their deepest needs and desires, in accordance with which they would instead like to have, love and respect both parents. Children instinctively take sides and associate themselves sometimes with the violent person, against the one who is considered guilty and therefore deserves to suffer the punishments inflicted on him or her, and sometimes, on the other hand, they ally themselves with and in their hearts try to defend the victim. In still other cases, not knowing for whom to side and whom to support and protect, they prefer to distance themselves physically or at least psychologically from both parents, so as not to be involved in a situation that they cannot

define, understand, let alone manage.

Fortunately, there are parents who try not to bicker in front of their children, so as to protect them from exposure to conflict. This is undoubtedly positive and a sign of great responsibility, but it is not always effective, due to children's instinctive ability to easily understand emotions, even if they are not openly expressed.

We know that very intense and violent conflicts frequently lead to the separation of the couple. However, this solution is not always effective, because about one and a half years after separation, at least one third of the couples surveyed continue to clash and one quarter of them continue to do so in the following four years. For this reason, both when the parents are separated or divorced and when they manage to cohabit, despite the conflicts, it is common for the children to suffer considerably (Ah- rons, 1981, p. 51).

These sufferings can manifest themselves in a variety of ways.

1. Lower conflict management skills with easy outbursts of anger.
2. Greater sensitivity to conflicts themselves.
3. Reduced capacity for self-regulation in relationships with oneself and others, resulting in poor social adaptation and even serious difficulties in the relational field.
4. Regressive symptoms, with a return to outdated developmental stages.

5. Presence of several serious fears: of the dark, of animals, of death or the loss of one or both parents and so on.
6. Presence of night terrors, eating disorders, emotional insecurity.
7. Distorted beliefs about the legitimacy and normality of aggressive behaviour.
8. Presence of depressive disorders that may manifest themselves as apathy, abulia, feelings of indifference and detachment, closure, feelings of guilt and unworthiness.
9. Lower overall psychophysical well-being.
10. Behavioural disorders: mistrust, irritability, aggressiveness, easy outbursts of anger, oppositional defiant behaviour, alcohol and/or drug abuse, sexual promiscuity.
11. Disturbances in the cognitive area: difficulties in learning, attention and memorising, reduced ability to process what has been read or heard, but also reduced ability in logical reasoning.

These affective and emotional changes in children, if not quickly and promptly resolved, will tend to persist over time, turning into adult psychological disorders. These disorders, in turn, will easily be transferred to the next generation, accentuating social discomfort. Many parents try to defend themselves against guilt by refusing to accept that their children's problems are due to their conflictual behaviour. They therefore try in every way possible to attribute their children's symptoms of discomfort to congenital factors or congenital badness. Consequently they tend to

to distance themselves even more from them, leaving the other spouse with all responsibility (Ackerman, 1968, pp. 226-227).

If the suffering experienced is the same in both sexes, there are, however, different ways of experiencing it: *externalising behaviour* is more present in male children. That is, behaviour in which the child's distress spills outwards, causing disturbance in the surrounding environment. For example, the child insists to the point of exhaustion to get what he wants, has oppositional attitudes towards adult demands, attacks others to get what he wants. In girls, on the other hand, *internalising behaviour* is more prevalent. This is behaviour in which girls tend to keep their emotional states within themselves, without manifesting them openly, especially when they fear that they are somehow responsible for their parents' conflicts. In such cases, girls may experience anxiety, depression, social withdrawal and psychosomatic disorders.

However, just as children are sensitive to conflict their parents, the relationship between the parents can also be negatively influenced by the behaviour of the children. Hence: "The psychological identity of the marital couple shapes the child, but the child, according to its needs, also shapes the marital couple" (Ackerman, 1968, p. 34).

In these cases, a vicious circle can be established: parental problems and conflicts can provoke psychological problems in the children, with behavioural and oppositional defiant symptoms; these symptoms, in turn,

may conflicts in the couple, either because of increased stress or because of the emergence of mutual accusations: 'It is your fault: you have not been able to bring up our son well, you have been too permissive'. Or: 'You were too strict'; 'You work too hard, you are never present'; 'You never take care of him'. Or even: 'Your temper transferred to our son.

The evaluation of acts of violence

The legal, social and moral assessment of acts of violence is particularly difficult and problematic for several reasons:

1. Since violent acts are considered to be all those forms of behaviour that, from a social, ethical and legal point of view, qualify as such, the distinction between violent and non-violent acts can vary widely in time and place, depending on religion, customs and laws in force at that particular historical moment. For this reason, some behaviours are accepted in a certain time or society, but are rejected in another time or social context. For Ajuriaguerra (1995, p. 29): 'There is a correlation between culture and violence: if cultural paradigms change, violent expressions change and may increase or disappear. Violence, in short, is a manifestation of the culture that dominates a certain historical moment'. And again the same author gives an example: 'Pedagogical punishments have long been regarded as an instrument of training.

They were not only applied, but also required; once pedagogy was introduced as play and no longer as sacrifice, they became life' (Ajuriaguerra, 1995, p. 11).

2. The subject's reactivity to another person's behaviour him or her can be the most varied, and this in accordance with very numerous and broad parameters. This reactivity can be closely linked to sexual characteristics, age, social conditions and the other person's and one's own personality characteristics. For example, in the case of bullying, this can be experienced as violence when it comes from a person who does not have the sexual characteristics, physical appearance, age, social status or ethnicity that suit our tastes and desires at the time. Conversely, the same behaviour may be welcomed, even demanded, when it comes from a person who for various reasons suits our needs and desires.
3. Behaviour that is objectively judged as minor may be experienced with great suffering by a disturbed, over-sensitive or reactive personality, whereas, on the contrary, behaviour that is objectively more serious may be quietly accepted, well metabolised and managed by a serene subject with a strong psychological temperament.

4. The same behaviour may be experienced as violence by one sex, while it may not be seen as such by another sex.
5. As far as acts of psychological violence are concerned, since they have no physical support can be examined and estimated, they easily escape an examination of reality; therefore, it is difficult to assess not only their seriousness, but also their real consistence.
6. Equally complex is being able to assess in individual cases who is guilty and who is the victim, since in some situations, the erroneous or irritating behaviour of one partner, even if it is of minor severity, may have caused an accumulation of tension in the other, which may later lead to clear-cut violent behaviour, which is therefore the result of an exasperated mind. Pasini (1993, p. 56) says: 'There are those who have developed a form of viciousness that consists in frustrating others in a passive but tenacious manner. These are the so-called passive-aggressive personalities, who hide behind a mask of submissiveness and modesty'.
7. In addition, certain violent behaviour may be the consequence of mental disorders that the subject has carried with him since childhood, or may be the effect of severe stress or moments of distress that the subject has been forced to endure in the working, family and social environment.

cial. For these , the moral and social judgement on this person cannot be one of clear-cut condemnation.

8. Just as there are acts of real violence, there are also acts of false violence, which are intended to make one's adversary look bad in order to achieve unlawful ends. For example, in 50 per cent of extra-judicial separation cases, brutality is alleged. This does not mean that violence actually took place. Unfortunately, attributing aggressive behaviour to the other party is one of the many strategies used by some despicable matrimonial lawyers in order to get something extra for their client in the separation. As Roberto (2016) says: "Mistreatment in the family is becoming a weapon of retaliation in civil litigation during separations. Only in two out of ten cases is it true abuse. The rest are emphasised complaints used as blackmail against husbands during separation. False complaints or accusations in the context of separations, divorces and cohabitation terminations are present in the survey on violence against men in 512 cases out of the total number of cases investigated (48.4 per cent) (Ma- grì et al. 2012). In addition, in some situations, acts of aggression by a member of the couple may have been artfully proffered to justify accusations of violence in the courts. It is evident that in these

cases, the real victim is the one who, through words and behaviour, has been provoked and not the one who has suffered the consequent acts of violence, the result of one or more offences aimed precisely at provoking the other.

THE CAUSES

The causes of aggression and the resulting violence are manifold. Some are linked to genetic characteristics, anatomical features, diseases and organic changes; others are due to psychological problems in the person's personality. Other reasons for aggression are to be found in a social environment that is unsuitable for a person's development, as in the case of people who are victims of frustration, oppression, discrimination, social isolation and poverty. Other times, the causes can be attributed to state policies and laws that are unsuitable for preventing aggression between the sexes, well as inefficient judicial systems.

Hacker (1971, p. 81) summarises them as follows:

"Specific hereditary, innate and genetic factors, psychological and cultural influences, structures of the

nerve system

central, as well as hormones and social patterns determine, in their effects and mutual intertwining, the phenomenon of aggression'.

In general, we can say that violence increases when people experience anxiety and fear in their environment, when they feel threatened or when they are insecure about themselves.

Anatomical aspects

As far as aggressive behaviour is concerned, the considerable progress in neuroanatomical knowledge has been based on studies of experimental physiology carried out on animals (Moruzzi G. 1975), on the results of direct and in-direct observations from surgical lesions and on the therapeutic electrical stimulation of certain brain areas of patients with serious diseases. Further indications were provided by the numerous observations from patients with localised brain lesions, from subjects suffering from epilepsy, encephalitis, head trauma, brain tumours, etc. (Moruzzi G. 1975).

From a neurological point of view, whereas in the twenties the brain areas involved in the management of aggression were located at the base of the brain, in particular in the *locus niger*, today these areas are thought to be present in various neuronal systems in the *limbic system* and in the *central encephalic region*. Ajuriaguerra (1995, p. 73) lists several areas involved in aggression: *the olfactory bulb, the hippocampus, the septal nuclei, the raphe nuclei in the floor of the fourth ventricle and the amygdala*.

It is now thought that there is a large region which,

when aroused, causes aggressive and

struggle. This region begins in the *telencephalon*, continues in the *limbic system*, runs through the *hypothalamus* and ends in the *midbrain*.

The hypothalamus is directly and/or indirectly connected to the physical-vegetative manifestations of emotions and is thus capable of modulating the physiological states associated with fear, anger, hunger, thirst, sex and pleasure. Behavioural alterations associated with hypothalamic function are connected with expressions of anger, aggression and fear as a response to stress, danger or defence situations (Moruzzi, 1975).

Alterations in the *hippocampus* can also impair the processing of emotional information.

Numerous clinical trials have confirmed the importance of the *amygdala* as a centre concerned with mediation of anxiety and fear, feelings that underlie attack and flight behaviour in both animals and man's aggressive behaviour. Bilateral amygdalectomy, for example, achieved in 85% of the cases treated in a clinical study a drastic reduction in violent behaviour. In other cases, the presence of lesions of the amygdaloid nuclei was associated with violent behaviour.

The area of the frontal cortex, where emotions are processed, is also affected. More precisely, aggression management is handled by the *orbital portion of the frontal lobes*. In order to release anger, the brain must suppress this cortical activity. This suppression of cortical activity that *controls the amygdala* in women is more difficult to attenuate whereas in men it is relatively easier

do this. This could explain the easier outbursts of aggression in the male sex. Furthermore, some findings have revealed a reduction in nerve communication between the amygdala, the seat of emotion, and certain areas of the prefrontal cortex that generally act as a filter on the amygdala, suggesting that low serotonin levels make it more difficult for the prefrontal cortex to control fear responses.

Genetic aspects

Since the 19th century, scholars have tried to identify the genetic basis of aggression. *Lombroso*, the founder of criminal anthropology, thought that there were peculiar anatomical features in individuals who had an innate inclination to evil.

Genetic factors also appear to be important in some psychiatric syndromes, where violent and antisocial behaviour is the prevailing aspect, such as in poor impulse control disorder and antisocial personality disorder.

In some cases, sex chromosome alterations have been shown to be closely related to aggressive behaviour. For example, subjects with the XYY genotype at four chromosomes are described as impulsive violent and prone to criminal actions.

Non-specific and rarer aggressive behaviour has also been described in Klinefelter syndrome, which affects male subjects with an XXY karyotype. The aggressiveness could be linked to the considerable mental retardation that these subjects present from birth and to the presence of: emotional vulnerability, hyperactivity, irritability, outbursts of anger

and bas-

knows threshold to frustrations. The aggressiveness of these individuals, mainly in childhood and sometimes adolescence, characterised by indiscriminate aggression against all those who tend to approach and come into contact with them.

Also for Moriconi (2011): 'Those who easily lose control, to the point of acting aggressively, may have a genetic predisposition to impulsivity. For example, a mutation called Q20 in the HTR2B gene'. In the latter case, however, the results are not unambiguous and numerous researchers on antisocial personality point to an interaction between biological and environmental factors.

Hormonal aspects

The hormones most frequently studied as modulators of aggressive behaviour in humans are sexual and steroid hormones in general. The relationship between hormones and aggression is complex and not completely understood.

Neuroendocrinological research has given an important role to testosterone, and to androgenic hormones in general, in explaining the greater male aggressiveness, while the greater docility of the female gender has been related to the presence of oestradiol, considered the inhibitor par excellence of aggressiveness.

This seems to be confirmed by the administration of testosterone, carried out in several animal studies and also in humans, which resulted in an increase in aggression in both sexes, whereas castration in the male sex was followed by a reduction in aggressive drive. It is also

A higher blood level of testosterone was found in violent women than in calmer ones.

However, human social behaviour is much more complex than the amount of a hormone. Therefore, some authors do not believe that testosterone increases aggression, whereas it is true that this hormone promotes honesty and pro-social behaviour in both men and women.

Per Ajuriaguerra (1995, p. 70):

"Aggression as a response to certain stimuli depends on the emotional conditions of the subject, on his ability to absorb frustrations, on the experience of pain; testosterone and other hormones play their role in this perceptual-interpretive whole. "It would be a mistake, in analogy to what has been observed for the Y chromosome, to claim that testosterone is the hormone of violence, both because it is greatly affected by environmental conditions and because conditions are known in which the correlation is not confirmed" (Ajuriaguerra, 1995, p. 69).

And again (Ajuriaguerra 1995, p. 68):

"From the point of view of biological parameters, increased aggression is linked in the male, particularly during puberty, to larger testicles and a higher plasma testosterone concentration. Even in these cases, behaviour is not independent of experience: in many cases aggressive animals that experience social situations in which aggression is lost can learn behaviour that limits aggressive behaviour'.

The APA in 1994 recognised premenstrual dysphoric disorder, characterised by affective lability, feelings of anger and hostility with an associated neurovegetative symptomatology. Progesterone and oestrogen levels are lower during the premenstrual week. Recent studies on different animal species, however, have shown that this relationship is not so linear and automatic. It has been shown that sex hormones can have different effects on people of the same sex but different species. Moreover, these effects would change in relation to periods of life and would be affected by the interaction with other hormones such as adrenalin and noradrenalin. The issue therefore remains controversial.

Neurotransmitters

For several years, numerous studies have analysed the role of neurotransmitters in aggressive behaviour. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that allow information to pass from neuron to neuron and form the basis of brain function, which is closely linked to the many biochemical, psychopathological and behavioural phenomena of the individual.

Animal studies have shown that aggression is promoted by neurotransmitters such as acetylcholine, dopamine and noradrenalin, while serotonin and GABA play an inhibiting role. A special role played by norepinephrine (favouring aggressive behaviour) and serotonin (inhibiting action). These observations are borne out clinically when we note, for example, the anti-aggressive action of compounds

Such as lithium salts; this action seems to be determined by the antinoradrenergic activity of the salts themselves and on the other hand by the blocking of serotonin reuptake. Continuing advances in biochemistry and neurophysiology, made possible by ever-improving techniques, have also enhanced the role of neuropeptides (cholecystokinin, CCK) and opioids (Luck and Struber, 2007, p. 35).

Psychological aspects

In this chapter we will delve into what influence the individual's psychic life has on the emergence of aggressive and violent feelings and behaviour.

Since, as Dacquino (1994, p. 309) says: 'Peace is a symptom, i.e. the external consequence of a harmonious internal psychic state', we must necessarily delve into what it is and how this 'harmonious psychic state' comes to be disturbed and sometimes disrupted.

The psychogenic reaction

The simplest and most immediate cause capable of altering and disturbing the normal psychic balance is the *psychogenic reaction*. This is triggered when a negative environmental stimulus, which contains an intense emotional charge and deep emotional involvement, such as a physical assault, a cruel comment, an insult, a scathing criticism or worse, an uncovered betrayal, suddenly and unfairly befalls a person. In these cases, the ensuing reaction of aggression and anger is often immediate, tense, and addictive, as there is little or no restraint provided by judgement or rational reflection (Galimberti,

2006, Vol.3, p. 310). The consequences of psychogenic reactions can also be very serious, precisely because they are impetuous and poorly controlled and controllable. However, when they can be managed properly, both anger and aggression are short-lived and disappear quickly.

These kinds of reactions are frequent in children. Anger and rage easily flare up whenever their parents or other adults clumsily and inappropriately interrupt their play or force them to perform a task without adequate preparation. In such cases, an emotional reaction of anger and rage is triggered, which fortunately fades after a short time, so that a loving, tender peace is restored between the children their parents. This type of reaction is also common in adults, when they cannot control the words and phrases with which they address their partners or when the trust placed in the other person is grossly undermined, especially in the area of fidelity and consistency.

Stress

The condition is different when stressful situations act upon the individual. In such cases, the emotional reaction, which can also be aggressive, is triggered by a series of external stimuli that set in motion physiological and psychological responses of an adaptive nature. Stressful stimuli can be various kinds, but usually the stresses are of environmental origin, only occasionally resulting from unrecognised constitutional impediments (Wolff, 1970, p. 37).

Stress can result from physical, psychological and social events.

Physical stress may concern, for example, excessive muscular strain, cold, heat, overwork, fatigue, lack of regular nutrition, hunger or thirst.

Psychological stresses are usually caused by intense or frequent emotional stimuli (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 553). For example, having to cope with difficulty and pain, day in and day out, with the demands of people who live next door to us, such as over-demanding employers or office managers, who do not take into account the resistance to tiredness of their subordinates. In other cases, these stresses arise when one is forced to deal with unwilling and unaccepting colleagues or when there is a need to deal with and resolve excessively difficult, distressing and conflicting family situations: illnesses, bereavements, inappropriate behaviour on the part of children or spouses, and so on.

Social stresses. These stresses are triggered when one is confronted with particularly complex situations, characterised by interpersonal, social and individual difficulties: a sudden dismissal, a reduction in salary, the need to cope with considerably onerous economic commitments and so on (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 554).

Stress can be well coped with and managed, when it is not too frequent, not excessively intense, but also when the person experiencing it is strong enough, solid enough, and tough enough to cope. When the subject's efforts fail, because the stress exceeds the person's capacity to respond,

the individual is subjected to a vulnerability to physical and mental illness (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 553).

Often excessive stresses experienced during childhood also have repercussions in adulthood. Early negative environmental stimuli can be important in this respect: such as the child's early separation from his or her parents; having had to suffer frequent and serious conflict episodes within the family; depression or parental anxiety; bad relationships with certain teachers or peers. These and other difficult and conflictual experiences are capable of negatively altering an individual's sensitivity when he or she is forced to deal with other stressful stimuli during adulthood. Thus, at later times, even very modest and trivial stimuli can cause considerable inner tension and anxiety.

The severity of the damage caused by excessive stress is related to age, frequency and the psychological situation prior to the stressful impact. Therefore, the younger the child, the less chance he or she has of coping well with stressful factors (Meazzini, 2006, p. 32); the greater the frequency and duration of the stressful element, the more severe the damage caused to the subject's psyche. Furthermore, if the individual is psychologically healthy and robust, he/she will cope more easily stress. Conversely, if the person is fragile and disturbed, he or she will more easily fall victim to stressful situations (Meazzini, 2006, p. 32).

For these reasons, mild stress on a person who has the age, maturity and psychological robustness to

coping with it and enduring it, it produces few negative consequences or may even offer positive effects, such as greater personal gratification, due to the pleasure of coping successfully with an impervious and difficult path. If, on the other hand, the stressful situation is repeated frequently, is too intentional, or acts on a person who has already been subjected to early and repeated stress, the individual, despite his good will and all the attempts he has made to cope well with the demand, will not succeed and will be forced to give in and suffer the negative effects of the stress, with heavy physical and psycho- logical repercussions (Meazzini, 1997, p. 33).

For these reasons, when psychological pressure levels are considerably high, very few people are able to resist without giving in.

This type of stress with negative effects is called *distress*.

Prolonged *distress* over time produces organisational disorders. Distress also has negative psychological effects, such as increased heart rate, increased blood pressure and respiratory rate, immune system deficits, decreased reasoning abilities and thus greater difficulty in coping with the problems that arise from time to time. Distress also has negative psychological effects, such as increased susceptibility to fatigue, depression, irritability and reactivity, while the individual's memory and perception of external reality are impaired (Meazzini, 1997, p. 39).

Frustration

This is defined by Galimberti (2006, Vol. 2, p. 203) as an internal or external situation that does not allow to achieve a fulfilment or goal. We therefore experience this feeling when an expectation is in vain, when something or someone disappoints us. Expectation and disappointment may relate to an attitude, a behaviour, a response to a need that we imagined and anticipated but failed to achieve. Frustration is also felt when what we imagined came to pass, but failed to fulfil our deepest and truest desire and expectations.

Non-achievement and non-satisfaction are related not only to deficiencies in our living environment, but also to psychic problems in our personality, e.g. when an over-demanding superego is active in us, which does not allow us to obtain satisfaction from what we do, because it considers it unfair or reprehensible.

The reaction to frustrations depends very much on past experiences. For example, a child who is systematically criticised and devalued by his or her parents is more likely to respond aggressively as an adult, as he or she will grow up hyper-sensitive to criticism and humiliation. On the contrary, those who have had a good relationship with their parents and feel constantly supported and gratified by them will tend to evaluate positively and trust the behaviour of the people with whom they deal throughout their lives. The family environment therefore plays an important role in the perceptions and control of the child.

emotions, in particular aggression (Ajuriaguerra, 1995, p. 70).

The motivations that lead to frustration can be of various kinds:

- *Economic motivations.* For example, an adult subject will certainly experience a barely manageable distress that will turn into bitterness, if not violent aggression, when, despite having worked hard for a certain company for many years, he or she unexpectedly and unfairly finds himself or herself dismissed and, therefore, is forced to face serious financial problems.
- *Affective motivations.* Not least are the emotional frustrations: 'I had finally found the woman/man of my dreams, with all the qualities I was looking for and instead ... after only a few months, she left me for no good reason'; 'I thought being a father/mother was a beautiful thing and I sacrificed my whole life to be a good father/mother, but instead ... my children do not even look at me, intent as they are on going out in the world and having a good time with their friends'; 'I did a lot for my friend during the years we spent together at university and she repays me by talking badly about me to everyone'. As Bonino (2005, p. 15) states: '... there are great difficulties today in removing emotional frustration and coping with it in a non-aggressive manner'. These difficulties refer to the imperative, so strong in our culture, to always be successful people, in all fields, first and foremost the affective one.

- *Social motivations.* For example: 'I dreamt of a solid, healthy and harmonious family like my parents', with a good wife, children and a house of my own, but instead I saw my aspirations destroyed and cancelled, just because my wife fell in love with that awful man!

Non-excessive frustrations foster greater awareness, give a clearer and sharper sense of limits to the ego, stimulate and intensify the subject's strength, determination and commitment in seeking a solution to the problem or goal to be achieved. This improves the person's ability to adapt to the world around them, stimulating them to find suitable strategies to overcome disappointments.

Excessive or long-lasting frustrations, on the other hand, can lead to psychic disorganisation, which will be evidenced by symptoms such as tension, conflictuality, anxiety, fears, inhibition, aggression, easy irritability, dis-esteem for oneself, others and the world in which the subject lives.

A frustration is or is not excessive in accordance with multiple personal and environmental factors. In general, it is easier for it to be well controlled and managed when it is not frequent, not excessively intense, but above all when the person experiencing it is strong, solid and mature enough to cope with it.

Frustrations can be *acute or chronic*, depending on whether the events that did not allow us to achieve a goal or fulfilment took place over a short or prolonged period of time. Both children and adults,

We cope better with *acute frustrations* than with chronic frustrations, because in acute frustrations, after the disappointment, anger and rage, we look for a remedy, mediation, external help or support that will help us overcome the pain and disappointment. In *chronic frustration*, on the other hand, the possibilities for defence are progressively demolished, as the environment in which we live continues over time to limit the satisfaction of our needs and desires. Often, however, the effects of chronic frustration, which are the most frequent and numerous, do not cause social or family alarm, although they do have a considerable negative effect on the individual's psyche.

Frustration, after the initial suffering, may cause sadness and, later on, also closure towards the situations or people who have let us down. However, this closure may not only be limited to the persons or situations that caused the frustration, but may expand everything and everyone. As if to say: 'If this person, if this feeling, if this institution, e.g. marriage, has disappointed me, not only do I not want to deal with this person, with feelings like these or with the institution of marriage, but I also close and defend my life against all that these things represent: friendship, love, hope, commitment, trust, pleasure and so on'.

As in stress, the subjective element is also important in frustration. Therefore, the same episode can be experienced by different people, in different ways, depending on the personality characteristics and experiences of the moment. As Bonino (2005, p.14) puts it:

"The severity of the aggressive reaction is in proportion to the degree of motivation and emotional investment present, but it is also in proportion to a person's resilient capacities. Thus, there are some men and women who are more easily able to withstand frustration by finding new and more creative ways within themselves to achieve their goals, despite obstacles, and others who become despondent and depressed or react aggressively to even minor frustrations.

However, the reaction that follows frustration is not always total closure. There may be other types of responses, more reactive than passivity and closure, such as anger, rage and aggression. Of course, the most severe frustrations are those of an affective-relational nature. These tend to be long-lasting, so much so that they may even last a lifetime.

These considerations have considerable implications and explain why disappointments in early childhood can lead to very serious symptomatological pictures of psychomotor instability and withdrawal in children, whereas in adulthood, suffering childhood can lead to aggressive feelings and manifestations.

Psychic trauma

Different from frustrations and stresses is psychographic trauma. Just as physical trauma can result in a wound or laceration of the body, so psycho- psychological trauma can cause an injury to the psychic organism as a result of events that erupt abruptly in a destructive manner without the subject being able to respond in a way that is

adequate. This injury may be caused by a single event or by an accumulation of singularly tolerable arousals that the subject is unable to suppress or discharge (*abreaction*) by venting or processing them (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 639).

By the same author (Galimberti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 640):

"The traumatic effect depends on the susceptibility of the subject, the psychological conditions in which he or she finds himself or herself at the time of the event, the factual situations that prevent an adequate reaction, and the psychic conflict that prevents the subject from integrating the experience that comes to him or her from outside".

Consequences of psychological disorders

All considerably stressful or, worse still, traumatic experiences, as well as emotional deprivation, cause psychological alterations and neuronal dysfunctions, which stimulate, among other things, intense feelings and behaviour of rebellion and bitterness, both towards individuals, who in some way we believe have been or are still the cause of our suffering, and towards life or the world around us. So much so that psychopaths often justify their behaviour by referring to the injustice of which they have been victims (Pasini, 1993, p. 27). By coming to grips with life's problems, the individual may succeed in finding a realistic and positive solution to his inner problems, or he will have to face the failure of his attempts to do so (Pasini, 1993, p. 27).

vi. In this case, he will try to limit the harmful effects of frustration and conflict or he will simply discharge the tension through irrational actions. In the case of these

attempts should fail, he will be forced to suffer the effects of disorganisation and psychic breakdown (Ackerman, 1968, p. 71).

Negative feelings and events the environment tend in any case to leave indelible traces in the souls of both children and adults, which can generalise, expand and spread not only in space but also in time. When we find feelings of joy, love or trust all around us during our lives, these also spread and expand to unfamiliar people and environments. Similarly, frustrating, painful, sad, anxious or fearful feelings can be projected onto absolutely innocent and harmless people, animals or things. The same happens with regard to time. If we realise that our trust and esteem for others has been well placed, accepted, acknowledged and rewarded, this positive feeling will expand and project into the future. If, on the other hand, our helpfulness and openness to others has left us with disillusionment and suffering, we will tend and expect the same events to be repeated in the future, which may encourage us to withdraw into ourselves or to look down on others.

Of course, the smaller the person is and the more he or she has been severely injured, the more easily will the expansion of his or her inner experiences be realised and maintained in space and time. For these reasons, we find reactive and aggressive feelings and behaviour in many psychological disorders in childhood (autistic syndromes, oppositional defiant syndrome, psychomotor instability, behavioural disorders), but also in adolescence and adulthood (borderline disorders, anxiety disorders, anxiety disorders, and other disorders).

personality disorder, schizophrenia and so on). All of these pathologies often profoundly alter the relationship with others, to the point of crisis or serious difficulties. In fact, even if only 10% of violent people have clear psychiatric problems, there is no doubt that mental suffering frequently, though not always, provokes aggressive feelings and behaviour.

Retaliation

Sometimes the aggressive or violent reaction is justified by a sense of justice. The person who has been wronged or witnessed a wrong feels the need to make the perpetrator pay for this wrong. Again, the most irritable, reactive and vindictive people are also the most psychologically disturbed, as they experience every wrong with anguish until they can take their revenge.

Often these individuals, precisely because they have suffered so much, feel the need to retaliate against others. In the case of children, since the reality outside of them is very limited and restricted only to their parents and a few relatives, when one of them has made them suffer through their behaviour, since these people represent the whole world for them, it is the whole world that is unconsciously or consciously accused of having caused their suffering and it is therefore towards the whole world, without distinction, that they sometimes project closure, at other times aggression, resentment and the desire for revenge and revenge. Similarly, it is from every relationship with the whole world that the subject would like to relish the sadistic pleasure of hurting something or someone.

Increased sensitivity, susceptibility and reactivity

Another aspect not to be underestimated, which has a great influence on aggressive behaviour, is the consequent presence of an accentuated sensitivity and a marked susceptibility to every word, gesture or comment that can be understood as a criticism or accusation. This results in an easier, more immediate and tense reactivity to even the slightest disturbing or irritating attitude from others. According to Guèguen (2009, p. 98), the ability to withstand negative judgments and comments is significantly lower in individuals who have been or are subjected to suffering, trauma or excessive and unbearable stressful situations. Together with this, a strong externality and impulsiveness also prevails.

For Hacker (1971, p. 148), there are hyper- aggressive people because, being unconsciously aggressive they project their aggression onto others. Ultimately, they are hyper-aggressive in that, not realising this projection, they feel constantly attacked by others.

Also for Pasini (1993, p. 47):

"Angry and vindictive people are also the most easily susceptible. Precisely because they are incapable of contact with others, they express themselves in destructive and angry behaviour. are vulnerable individuals who, in anger, seek relief from the pain caused by narcissistic wounds in the past. present and the past".

Ultimately, people who have suffered a great deal in childhood or life for various reasons are often extremely sensitive to the negative judgments and behaviour of others,

and therefore easily take offence and are not afraid of being hurt.

They get angry, reacting aggressively to every slightest disagreement or irritating attitude from outside. This is not only because they tend to exaggerate critical attitudes on the part of others, but also because of the presence of a lack of control over their impulses.

The difficulty of forgiveness

People who are psychologically fulfilled, serene and calm not only accept criticism and rebuke more easily, but also forgive and forget the insults and insults they have received. On the other hand, people who have suffered a great deal tend to criticise others more easily, do not accept their jokes and critical judgements and, if offended, withdraw into themselves. Ultimately, their social relationships are poor, difficult and conflictual (Barberi, 2016, p. 38).

By the same author (Barberi, 2016, p. 38):

"...people and groups involved in episodes or situations of violence towards themselves or others have an extremely specific common trait: they are fundamentally incapable of coping with situations of serious contrariness. These individuals ultimately present a conflictual deficiency, i.e. a: '... lack of those personal and social components that enable us to perceive the critical situation as sustainable and not as a threat or danger'. 'The person with severe conflictual deficiency manifests violent behaviour even in the absence of particular tensions and without following the logic of escalation" (Barberi, 2016, p. 38)". It only takes a little to have violent behaviour. In these individuals, even if no conflict situation is present, there can be ex-

still be a violent response. For the same author: *'The violent person, therefore, is not a quarrelsome person. On the contrary, he is a person intolerant of quarrelling, dominated by the idea that no one should upset him'* (Barberi, 2016, p. 38).

Difficulties in relationships

From what we have said, it is easy to understand that, in relationships, the presence of a serene, trusting, cheerful, affectionate and helpful soul favours a loving understanding, while, on the contrary, the existence of psychological disorders, especially if they are significant and involving, makes not only a good mutual understanding more difficult, if not impossible, but also the most elementary and simple moments of serene dialogue. In particular, relationships with people with whom these individuals would like to establish an intimate, full and deep relationship are profoundly altered. Therefore, the days of these couples are frequently by constant bickering, which resolves nothing, and by quarrels that arise for trivial reasons. This inherent difficulty leads to the elements of the couple becoming more and more divided and estranged. So much so, that some or wives prefer to work outside the home, rather than suffer listening to their spouse's constant accusations and complaints.

Feelings of sadness and depression

The other element, which is often evident, is related to feelings of sadness, if not outright depression, which easily arise because of the suffering these people have undergone in their past. This melancholic and sad way of perceiving and experiencing others, one's own experiences and the world

around them can encourage sufferers to shut themselves away in a world of their own.

of apathy, asthenia, guilt and unworthiness. While, in other cases and at other times, there may be attempts to seek some rare, ephemeral pleasure. Being able to express anger and violence allows them to escape from the black depression and oppression in which they constantly live, feeling, at least for a few moments, more alive and vital. Both these behaviours, however, cause others to push them away, judging them as lazy and apathetic or reacting negatively towards them. This ultimately worsens the psychological malaise and accentuates the irritating and aggressive behaviour of these people.

Guilt

Another element that should not be underestimated is the conscious and unconscious feeling of guilt, which is frequently felt when the person tries in every way to suppress or erase aggressive drives and desires towards people he or she should love and respect, such as parents, spouses or children. In order to diminish such feelings of guilt, psychologically disturbed people often use irritating and arrogant attitudes, in order to urge other person to behave violently and aggressively towards them. In this way, they try to contribute to balancing their guilt, at least in part, so that they can feel at peace their conscience. As if to say: 'I am not bad, it is others who are bad; my behaviour is closely connected to the aggressive attitudes of others'. The classic case is that of betrayal. For the same reason, sometimes the cheating person irritates his partner to the point of making him lose his temper, so that he can justify his behaviour to himself and others.

The difficulties of dialogue

All psychic disorders make it difficult to relate and dialogue with others, as well as with oneself. Not being able to give what one has not had, one's capacity for care and tenderness, which, let us remember, together with sexuality, are the glues of couple relationships, are altered or diminished, along with dialogue. It is difficult, because of personal problems, to listen to and accept the other. It is difficult to make oneself available to care for the other. Likewise, it is difficult to mediate with the other, to value the other, or to seek satisfaction in the other. Moreover, often these people with mental disorders, unable to value the use of words, prefer to go toe-to-toe to resolve disputes.

The accentuation of needs

The needs of a person who has suffered a lot, apart from being difficult to understand, seem endless. Therefore, they can in no way all be satisfied. In such cases, it is a constant complaining about what the other person gives or does not give; does, does not do, or the way the other person behaves. To understand this inexhaustible hunger for appropriate behaviour, one must reflect on the fact that no one can give a son or daughter back the love or respect for their needs and requirements that were denied them childhood. No one can give a child back a father and mother who are scarcely present, if not totally absent. No one is able to give them the acceptance and listening they never had. Therefore, the demands are not only numerous, but tend to continue indefinitely.

Sexual difficulties

When clear psycho- logical problems are present, dissatisfaction in the partner relationship is accentuated, also because sexuality is often involved in psychic pathologies. This can take on unusual or pathological aspects. In men, there is often premature ejaculation or impotence that alter or make rich and satisfying sexuality impossible. In women, frigidity may occur, which makes any relationship approach that has even the slightest sexual component unbearable. Moreover, if some relationship is accepted, rather than living it with joy and gratitude it is judged dirty and unseemly or even the result of violence. Moreover, in both sexes, sexuality can be pathologically experienced due to the presence of para- philes, which, if accepted by both men and women, can be gratifying and unite both partners, but if, as often happens, they are desired and demanded only by one of them, they are seen by the other as unbearable acts of violence.

Sadomasochistic behaviour

Some people with psychological problems, in their search for moments of serenity, need to get rid of their tension and inner malaise through biting, irritating if not clearly aggressive and destructive behaviour. It is often said that these people find their identity in aggression. I would say that it is more accurate to say that these people seek moments of serenity and inner peace through external aggression. Aggression, irritation, creating havoc, using a polemical, exasperating tone about every word the other person says or every thing the other person does or does not do, serves to discharge and reduce their inner tension, which

affected by the problems or shortcomings of the past, without often having any relation to the current reality, which, in definition, is used to achieve the above-mentioned purpose. However, their partner invested in aggression, sometimes only motivated by the slightest pretext, if not totally unjustified, finds it difficult to be indifferent, and will therefore respond with equally aggressive and irritated behaviour. A sadomasochistic relationship is thus established in which all means of defence and offence are used. Thus the relationship is disrupted, with certainly disastrous results. Therefore, the dialogue, even if it was initially present and valid, if it sometimes breaks down for a short time, in cases where moments of exhaustion become frequent, it risks breaking down forever.

The decrease in self-esteem

If a person, precisely because of the problems that afflict him, does not like himself, does not esteem himself, does not have self-confidence, he can hardly love and esteem others. This is why love relationships that have just begun end very soon, while in other cases they do not even begin. However, these people with low self-esteem, if sometimes they close themselves off and give up seeking love relationships, at other times they insist on and exasperate the partners who have rejected and pushed them away, not accepting their rejection.

The causes of psychological disorders

Healthy and functional families

Much of the inner serenity and balance lies the child's

living environment and thus, especially in the

family. If this family has good characteristics, it will succeed in effectively structuring the personality of the ego of the children in its care, since it will be able to educate the new generations using an affective-relational environment rich in serenity, stability, listening, dialogue and mutual understanding.

In healthy, functional families, the warm, joyful and secure love of parents and other adults facilitates this function, making it possible to offer new generations the trust, security, serenity and continuity they seek and expect. The contributions of a healthy and functional family can develop and nurture human beings with a harmonious personality and a rich identity: people who are not only intelligent and capable, but also balanced, serene, mature and responsible.

A family with characteristics appropriate to its tasks succeeds, through education and example, in developing in children the skills necessary for good and effective integration and socialisation, because in this affectionately healthy and balanced environment, children are deeply respected, but they are also brought up to respect others. By accepting and respecting the ideas, thoughts and wishes of adults, the new generations are given the opportunity to be able to communicate and dialogue well. These qualities in turn will greatly facilitate all processes and levels of integration: initially with parents, then with other family members and finally with strangers.

Since the best apprenticeship towards the community takes place within a healthy and functional family, children are stimulated to be responsible and limit their desires,

They learn to compare them with the needs of others and are also able to recognise in their own behaviour the positive or negative consequences that may result from it for other family members, but also for mankind in general. Ultimately, in this type of family, the new generations are able to understand that true freedom is nourished by responsibility and respect for oneself and for others.

Moreover, this type of family is able to offer all its members, protection and shelter from external dangers, so as to be a safe haven from the negative factors prevailing in the social environment. Moreover, it succeeds in building and keeping alive a rich, active, participating, collaborating affective network: a network that is able to support the parents and, at the same time, is able to work with delicacy and care in the upbringing of the children in it.

A healthy and functional family is able to support and help each of its members in the most difficult and delicate moments of their existence: in the inevitable transitional phases of life, in stressful events, in cases of disability, in illness, in old age, in cases of bereavement or in the presence of serious difficulties. Ultimately, this type of family is able, through the loving and caring presence of responsible adults, to care for and nurture not only children, but also the elderly, lonely, disabled and sick members of the family.

A family with the characteristics we have described is also capable of procuring the necessary material goods that are indispensable for its personal and social life, without neglecting the

affective and relational functions. Moreover, since at least one third of the identity and sex roles are entrusted to the affective-relational environment in which the child lives, the healthy and functional family is able to develop correct identities and sex roles in the new generations: identities and sex roles that are indispensable for establishing healthy and serene love relationships with the opposite sex.

Ultimately, if a male acquires a full and complete identity and sexual role, so that he can offer his beloved woman and then his children the important and rich gifts of masculinity such as strength and courage, determination and understanding, coherence and straightforwardness, it will be thanks above all to the family in which he has lived and been formed as a man. Similarly, if a woman acquires a full and complete identity and sexual role, so that she can offer her feminine gifts such as gentleness and the ability to listen, understanding and tenderness, caring and welcoming skills to the man she loves, to her children and to society, it will be mainly thanks to the family in which she lived and was formed as a woman.

Ultimately, a healthy and functional family succeeds in each of its members what they need and what they lack, both in the material field and in the educational and emotional fields. Therefore, if future generations are to be strong, rich in material, cultural, spiritual and material goods, it will be thanks above all to this type of family.

Sick or dysfunctional families

On the contrary, sick or dysfunctional families are unable to perform one or more of the essential functions described above.

Since are confused, contradictory and often conflicting roles for parents and other family members and little attention and involvement in the needs of others, this type of family is characterised by frequent outbursts of aggression, escapes from intra-family responsibilities and commitments, difficulties in establishing effective communication and indifference or lack of attention to needs, especially of an affective-relational nature towards some or all of its members.

Lacking in these sick and dysfunctional families is the willingness to welcome, the necessary emotional warmth, the possibility satisfying emotional needs through true and deep dialogue. Just as lacking is the pleasure of being together and playing. Incorrect educational attitudes and behaviour, such as excessive or excessively frequent punishments and reprimands, or, on the contrary, too much permissive behaviour, which does not give the individual the chance to introduce the right values and healthy rules of social living, are frequent. Ultimately, these families present significant and constant emotional deficiencies. Therefore, the various individuals in them do not feel accepted, valued, loved.

In these families, children are often forced to witness and live through unhappy relationships, made up of prolonged and frequent conflicts between their parents, or they are forced to endure stress and trauma due to separations, divorces or early placement outside the family, in public or private day care centres. These unhappy relationships and family situations

bring

serious discomfort to individuals of developmental age, in whom fears of emotional loss, abandonment, uncared for, loneliness, develop and are accentuated when the necessary stability is not present around them. The complexity of human development, which requires harmonious, precise, intense and continuous affective and relational reference points for many, many years, is largely underestimated in these cases.

In dysfunctional families we also find the presence of people with major psychological disorders, by which it is difficult not to be influenced. These people do not give their children sufficient living space to allow their ego to express itself and assert itself, because of their anxiety that can manifest itself in everyday life with unmotivated fears and a multiplicity of events and situations. Anxiety that can spread to their entire family, unsettling, like an impetuous wind, the souls of those involved. Individuals suffering from major mental disorders can easily transmit their melancholy, sadness, apathy and asthenia to their environment. These depressive symptoms can spread, like a black, viscous river, into every emotional relationship they enter into. And again, how can one not suffer from the aggressiveness, dysphoria, irritability or great variability of mood present in individuals with mental disorders, when these make dialogue, listening and communication difficult, if not impossible?

Ultimately, when a child lives next to family members, especially parents, who have anxiety disorders, depression disorders, communication difficulties and other important pathologies, their psyche can easily be disturbed by

this environment is not physiological to its development. For these reasons, the frequently circulated image of the parents of an aggressive child or adult, i.e. that of a parent who physically abuses or sexually abuses their child, is limiting and partly true. These painful realities, fortunately, are only present in a few cases. The suffering that these children frequently suffer is made up of a more subtle and less visible evil, of which the parents are not co-scientists and which is difficult to detect from the outside.

The signs of disintegration and poor functionality present in ill or dysfunctional families cover a wide and varied range of psychiatric and social pathologies. Fears, sleep and eating disorders, complaints about physical complaints (headaches, abdominal pains, vomits), fits of rage, sudden emotional outbursts of aggression towards adults, peers, objects, souls, or even against oneself (self-harm), are frequent among its members, especially the youngest. Difficulties in communication and socialisation, learning problems, oppositional defiant attitudes, running away, but also immature behaviour or regressions to earlier developmental stages are also evident in children.

In young people, too, the presence of a dysfunctional family causes numerous and serious manifestations: withdrawal into oneself or into the pack; poor school results; asocial or anti-social behaviour; self-destructive and high phenomena alcohol or drug abuse; a sexual and emotional life without any real planning and without any responsibility for others or for oneself; behavioural disorders, eating habits or gender identity and role. And there is also running away, straying, slovenliness and aggression, without any obvious motivation; poor planning, even if only of a work-related nature; reduced sleeping hours or

loss of restorative sleep; reduced capacity for attention and concentration; suicide attempts; euphoria alternating with de-pressurisation; feelings of guilt or indifference towards others and one's own behaviour; boredom, apathy, asthenia. These problems, transferred to the social context, create economic and functional damage to the system that is all the more serious the more numerous and important the problems of these young people.

Sick and dysfunctional families, finally, are not able to develop adults with healthy identities and correct sex roles, which are indispensable for loving relationships with opposite sex, but also in relationships with future children. For this reason, the men who will develop are at risk of being unbalanced, insecure, immature, fragile, poorly determined or, on the contrary, excessively aggressive and violent, while the women will frequently be irritable, anxious, nervous, harsh, and incapable of care, tenderness, acceptance and listening.

All psychic problems are clearly on the increase in today's social environment, due to considerable educational deficiencies and the failure to respect the physiology of the child as it grows up.

These psychological problems are especially on the increase in couples embarking on an amorous and sexual path, because when emotional unions are formed, there is no family or social filter to prevent people with psychological problems from bonding with other people through marriage or simply through cohabitation, from which children may be born, who will inevitably be influenced by the psychological disorders of one or both parents. For all the reasons we have listed above, when a love game was proposed, the first and most important commitment of the family was to be the marriage.

and society was to choose for this purpose young people with little or no psychological problems, which could not only make the relationship between the spouses complex, but also alter and disrupt the dialogue and educational relationship with the children and extended family.

In the past, the filter was the popular voice, which, knowing the personality characteristics of the young people, was able to suggest and indicate which boy or girl had the indispensable qualities to run a family and a relationship and who was not able to do so. Acting as a filter were the parents and relatives of the two young people, who, being held responsible for the success of the bond and the characteristics of the children they were proposing for marriage, were encouraged to select who was capable of marrying and who was not suitable to take this important step. These two filters, the social filter and the family filter, are today totally absent, as it is the young people who seek each other out, choose each other, decide whether or not to have sexual relations, whether or not to have children, but also what type of union to establish between them: whether of partnership, marriage or simple affectionate friendship. In definitive terms, the full and complete sentimental and sexual freedom that exists in modern Western societies allows everyone, even the most psychologically disturbed, to initiate and pursue clearly pathological love and sexual relationships, with devastating consequences for the individual members of the couple, for the children, for the families concerned and for society as a whole.

It is sometimes hoped that married life will cure immaturity or psychological disorders. This is true, but only partially. A good

love relationship may ameliorate a slight psychological problem, but it certainly neither eliminates nor solves it.

Super-evaluation of our possibilities and capabilities

Frequent causes of stress and frustration are also to be found in the lack of awareness of our physical and psychological limits and the simultaneous overestimation of our possibilities and capabilities.

Many of us, if not all of us, wish we had special and exceptional qualities and abilities. Therefore, video games, comic books, films and TV series featuring any superheroes are watched and loved not only by children but also by adults, who are enraptured by the incredible performances of women and men who perform amazing feats and identify with them. Women and men more like gods than ordinary mortals. If we are then frequently told by the mass media that our potential is far greater than what we normally use in everyday life, that's it: we are certain that we can do more and better. And woe betide those who try to scale down our dreams and aspirations by suggesting, for example, that we do 'a few things well, rather than many things badly'!

This applies to both sexes, but for some decades now, women have been immersed up to their necks in this bath of illusions. Women, according to many educated people, such as journalists, priests and scholars of the human psyche, have so many qualities that they can cope with a multitude of daily tasks without any problems. The so-called 'feminine genius' and the astonishing '*multitasking*' abilities,

would allow women to tackle a multitude of interests, activities and commitments with the same drive, success and without particular difficulties.

Every woman could easily take care of her children, following them carefully through the various stages of life. She could therefore nurse them lovingly when they are small, educate them in their growing years, follow them in their schooling, help them in the difficult times of their lives. But this is not enough. The same women, however, would also be able to be attentive and affectionate daughters to their elderly parents, as well as passionate spouses, partners or girlfriends to their men, so as to offer them not only the necessary attention and care, but also friendship and untiring support to cope with the adversities of life. Moreover, the same women, if they are well motivated, outside their homes and families, would be able devote themselves efficiently, intelligently and skilfully to any kind of work of their choice, in order to make a valuable contribution to society.

If, for example, they are called upon to perform the valuable work of a teacher in a school, they will certainly be ready to listen, teach and follow the pupils entrusted to them for many hours every day with love, patience and dedication. If, on the other hand, they would like to devote their efforts to the production of goods and services, whether in a factory or in a public or private office, they will certainly not fail to offer companies and society the product of their hands and their ingenuity. If they then want to perform even more arduous, stressful and physically demanding tasks, tasks that used to be performed only by the stronger sex, such as piloting a plane or leading, as a militiaman, the production of goods and services,

they will certainly not fail to offer the companies and society the product of their hands and their ingenuity.

some important, arduous and dangerous mission abroad, they will certainly not flinch and will use all their personal physical and mental talents to bring any task entrusted to them to a successful conclusion. In short, everything should be possible for every woman and everything could be done well, if only she were given the necessary availability, trust and support from society.

The same could apply to men, if they could shake off a certain innate laziness but also nostalgia for the good old days. These vices tend to bind and restrict them to old and outdated roles. They, like women, could at the same time be able to bring up and educate children, even small ones; they could cook and do all the housework; they could be enthusiastic, fun and excellent companions for their women, and they would certainly not fail to lovingly care for their parents, as well as, of course, offering their talents in the field of work, in the political arena, in trade unions. Finally, why not? In their spare time, they could also engage in volunteer work!

The imagined and dreamed benefits that, at least in theory, one could receive from a multiplicity of commitments are many:

- More rewards could be obtained.
- It would be possible to produce more wealth, thus offering society and new generations better cultural, social and economic opportunities.

- Using the various experiences offered by the activities undertaken, one could be enriched both materially and culturally.

Despite the fact that these benefits seem at first glance to be self-evident and within reach, however, things do not always proceed as desired, sought and hoped. There are many reasons for this.

1. First of all, the time needed to do everything would like to do and is stimulated to do, is often not there, and when one does manage to carve it out, one often has the distinct feeling that it is just 'scraps', which one is busy devoting to oneself, children, old parents, work, politics, friendships, love affairs, etc. And with scraps, as seamstresses know, it is difficult to make a respectable dress, unless one wants to sew a ridiculous Harlequin outfit, good only for making friends laugh during the course of a meal. And with trimmings, as seamstresses well know, it is difficult to make a respectable dress, unless one wants to sew a ridiculous Harlequin outfit, good only for making friends laugh at carnival parties.
2. Often, when our occupations and commitments are numerous and excessive and we chase after time, which we nevertheless feel is getting out of hand, we become sad and despairing, noticing that our actions lack the necessary enthusiasm, depth and richness. In short, we clearly feel that we are unable to go beyond the

surface of things and relationships. This is most evident and pregnant when we are forced to deal more with people than with objects. In these cases we are well aware that we do not have

the time needed to weave deep love and relationships, attention and solid, fruitful bonds. In these cases, we are forced to realise that the fatigue and stress accumulated day after day prevent us from dialoguing and listening to others with the serenity and willingness required. Stress, tiredness and haste also make it difficult for us to delve into the problems that we should be able to face and solve from time to time. Ultimately, we realise with dismay that these relationships are lacking not only in quantity but also in quality.

3. When we are committed beyond our psychic and physical possibilities, we soon realise with dismay that the hoped-for gratifications go up smoke, while both failures and frustrations increase. Not least because, sooner or later, others will point out or brutally hold against us more our shortcomings than our successes. For example, they will hold against us the anxiety with which we relate, the excessive haste and superficiality with which we try to deal with various commitments. Our children will point this out to us: "Why, mum, do you always run even when you are at home and never talk or play with me?" "Why is dad always at the office until late and I don't see him except in the evening, for a goodnight kiss?" "Why when we have to get up in the morning we have to get up from the bed shout

always and you are in such a hurry?" Our partners, the husband, the wife, our partner, the girlfriend, the boyfriend, throw it in our face: "I never see you and when you are with me, you are always in a hurry and have your head in the clouds". "Why do you always hold this damn Smart fon in your hands? Don't you realise you caress him more than me?" "Why are you always thinking about your work, even when we are together?" Our elderly parents also complain, begging us with tears in their eyes to be a little more present so they can relieve their loneliness. Our superiors will point this out in the office when they find us inattentive, tired, anxious, or with our minds wandering away from the work we have to do and are paid for, so much so that they are forced to take us back: "What's the matter, accountant? Why do you look at me and don't seem to listen to what I say? Why have you made so many unforgivable mistakes for which you deserve to be fired?" The pupils describe their parents' behaviour of their teacher who likes to do a thousand things in these terms: "Even today, Mum, the teacher was so nervous and scolded everyone, I don't understand why? I too cried hearing her shouting like a madwoman'. If we are doctors, our patients point out. "I tell you about my ailments and you, doctor, don't examine me at all,

He doesn't even look at me and only thinks about writing recipes!"

4. On the other hand, hopes and dreams of higher economic incomes often go up in smoke, as it is all too easy for employers, having a flood of demands at their disposal, rather than giving good salaries to a few, to lower salaries and offer starvation wages to many.

The reality that we fail to face is that the possibility of multiplying our energies between home, children, work, social commitments, leisure activities, in such a way that nobody suffers, is more an illusion than something concrete and real.

The reality that we absolutely do not want to take into consideration and do not accept is that our physical and psychic energies are limited. Therefore, when we abuse them and try to overdo our commitments, it is very difficult if not impossible to do everything well, as the fatigue and anxiety we have to manage limit and block us inexorably.

There are many defences that we often put up in order not to accept that we are striving above our possibilities and limits.

The first defence, which is used a lot today, although few are willing to admit it, is to pretend, first in front of ourselves and then in front of others, that we can and do take care of everything, when in fact we can do even the simplest things badly.

In such cases, we pretend to be engaged in a thousand occupations, when in fact, consciously or unconsciously, we have made choices. Choices of which we are aware.

and which we are unwilling to admit even under torture. Therefore, we use a large part of our physical and mental energies to deal with certain activities, e.g. work, while consciously or unconsciously we have decided to neglect the family or, on the contrary, we devote our best energies to the family while neglecting work or other commitments.

We often use the system of delegation: we are fathers and mothers but our children are cared for, listened to, looked after and educated by others: by , nursery staff, kindergarten staff, after-school teachers and so on. We are children who are supposed to take care their elderly parents, but we entrust the care and upbringing of these to caregivers or to some nursing home. We should be cooking for the family, but we have no time and we buy frozen food, already pre-cooked or even cooked. We are employees of the state, but we try hard not to go to work using a thousand tricks. We are employed in some private firm, but we know how to get some three-monthly no-vine who would give their souls to be employed in our place, while we relax by playing and chatting on the computer or with the smart phone.

Another defence is to blame others for our shortcomings and responsibilities. In these cases, the most targeted are the people close to us: the wife or husband; the partner; children or parents; work colleagues superiors. All of these, we unfairly blame for being indolent, lazy and unaccustomed to getting involved in the thousand daily tasks and we criticise them

accusing them of being unwilling to support, help or replace us when needed and when we feel it is necessary.

Therefore, if we are married or cohabiting, the most frequent sentence is: 'I could do everything well if only he or she would cooperate with me more'. If one is separated, this defence is even easier: 'I cannot do everything well because of my ex, who only thinks about having fun with his new flame and does not take care of our children at all'. In other cases, the blame is placed on the children, who do not cooperate with the necessary commitment and solicitude; that is, on the children who do not obey, are lazy, and force us to slow down every activity we would like to undertake. The accusation can also be levelled at one's own parents, who are not sufficiently involved in the care of their grandchildren, or who are always too permissive or incapable of bringing up the children in their care, or who complain about many imaginary illnesses in order waste our time.

If we really do not want to accuse anyone, let us use a more subtle means of defence, which is very much in vogue in this historical period. One can safely use the endorsement of science, or rather 'pseudoscience'. In recent decades, this has generously come to the rescue of very problematic individuals or families, with a thousand studies and research that are hardly credible, if not outright false. If, for example, someone points out to us that our children are neglected, if they do not learn to read and write well, if they grow up with bullying behaviour, if their fears, anxieties, depression and distress make them feel bad, if children with oppositional defiant disorder, dyslexics, autism, depression, ADHD syndrome or adulthood problems are diagnosed, then we are left with a

'pseudo-science'.

the most frequent defence is to shift the origin of the problem to other causes that exclude us, our tiredness, our limited time, our shortcomings or our inadequate commitment. In all these cases, pseudo-science helps us to find some special gene as the cause of the problems that might have caused the disorder or our children's illnesses. The same pseudoscience reassures us about our lack of or inadequate commitment by suggesting that there is probably an area of the brain that, due to some micro-lesion that cannot be detected by clinical and instrumental examinations, is not its job as it should. Or that the pathology is due to some strange connection with the indisputable air and sea pollution. Not to mention the possible negative influences of vaccines or some food to which our children are intolerant.

Unfortunately, however, despite all the psychological defences put in place, the truth tends to peep into our minds, creating discomfort and frustration.

SOCIO-RELATIONAL ASPECTS

There are many signs that suggest a growing discomfort between the two genders in the Western world and in our historical period.

- Separations, divorces increasing.
- Increasing number of singles.
- Lawsuits and violence trials brought by both sexes are on the rise.
- Mistrust of other, expressed both verbally and in behaviour, increases.

- It decreases the solicitude, acceptance and helpfulness between men and women in caring for each other.

The negative view of the opposite sex

One of the most important socio-relational causes that significantly distorts the relationship between the sexes is the current negative view of the opposite sex. In encounters and relationships we have with the opposite sex, be they superficial or very intense and deep, all the problems concerning the relationship with diversity are inherent and could not be otherwise. As Ackerman (1970, p. 77) puts it:

"From birth to death, the human being moves, changes and develops according to his way of adapting to diversity. There come times when conflict is inevitable; it is intrinsic to the struggle for existence, intrinsic to the process of change and development".

The relationship with diversity has never been easy. In some historical periods and in some societies, encounters with peoples and people with different characteristics in terms of religion, values, culture, customs and worldviews have been seen as an opportunity for enrichment, confrontation and understanding. In other cases, those who are different from us have been expected to completely conform to our culture, our laws, our customs, our language and our religion.

This way of seeing and dealing with diversity has always been present in the social field and in relations between peoples

and different ethnic groups. This resulted in an endless series of conflicts, marginalisations, religious wars, but also the many unbelievable horrors of the extermination camps, which had as their declared objective the physical elimination of the 'different'.

This fear of confrontation with those who have something different from us, this refusal to get to know, welcome and accept those whose language, religion, customs, physical features and skin colour differ from our own, this refusal to establish fruitful cooperation and understanding with them, has in recent decades also involved the field of sexual differences. Therefore, for many, the opposite sex has become a stranger to be kept at a distance, an enemy to be accused of every possible wrongdoing, a being to be shunned and demonised.

As a solution to avoid constant contrasts and clashes, for more than half a century people have been aiming at homogenisation, using education. It has become almost an axiom to affirm that children, men and women, in order to better understand and accept each other, since they cannot be, at least for the time being, equal, should be as similar as possible. To achieve this goal and to ensure that there is no difference, it is considered useful that men and women are educated in the same way, dress similarly, behave in the same way, speak the same language, engage in the same work and social activities.

In this field, too, in order not to face the difficulties of a relationship between different people, the choice has been to opt for confrontation or homologation, without taking into

account the indisputable fact that diversity, both in the field of relations between peoples and

Particularly in relations between the sexes, who possess special qualities and abilities, when accepted, accepted and well managed, it is not only useful but valuable. It offers the possibility of considerable mutual enrichment, which could not be achieved in any other way.

On the contrary, when diversity is resisted or denied, not only does this result in personal and social impoverishment, but it also inevitably leads to the emergence of significant and serious misunderstandings, confrontations and violent clashes. The most striking proof of the richness brought by integration is present in each of us. It is well known, in fact, that the individual's ego is born and develops precisely through the first relationships he establishes with those different from himself. At first, every child that is born is confronted with his mother, immediately afterwards with his father and then with his other family members: brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles. Later on, this 'I', which is born precisely from the relationship with others and the integration of differences, has the opportunity to grow, becoming more and more mature, responsible, ductile, strong and culturally rich, precisely through the confrontation and partial inclusion of thoughts, experiences, feelings and emotions drawn from people whose age, gender, thoughts, social and individual characteristics differ from one's own. As Roberto says (2016, p. 13):

"Without the confrontation with difference, that is, without the relationship, there would be no identity. Without the other, the ego would not be: for this reason, the ego will have to learn to dialogue with the other, and only by dialoguing with the other will the ego find harmony with

itself.

That said, we cannot, however, underestimate how complex and difficult it is to deal with diversity. In the case of male-female encounters, it is necessary to be able to challenge both the problems associated with different individual characteristics and those due to gender identity and gender roles. This relational journey is certainly difficult, so much so that it is necessary to possess a good degree of maturity and personal serenity in order to succeed. This path is certainly arduous, but it is an indispensable one if personal and social growth is to be achieved.

For Roberto: (2016, p. 12):

"Daily coexistence with diversity confronts us and poses problems that cannot be ignored, but rather pushes us towards the adoption of cultural and welcoming strategies. A confrontation that implies a readiness on the part of the individuals who enter into relations to question their beliefs, values, the basic assumptions on which we ourselves build our identity, both individual and collective. But this willingness requires not only the courage to change, but also the commitment that must be put into the transformation, as well as the ability to deal with the psychological, social and economic costs that are necessary for change'.

It is clear that if, with regard to the acts and behaviour of the opposite sex, we dispose our minds to trust, openness and listening, understanding, meeting and acceptance will be easier. If, on the other hand, we are inclined to judge every word or behaviour of those around us negatively and suspiciously, or if our mind is perceptually biased, we are more likely to be able to understand, meet and welcome them.

With the help of many intense and enthralling prejudices, all the relationships we enter into with the opposite sex, even those which, in the exaltation of the falling in love phase, seem splendid and wonderful to us, will after a short time be negatively influenced. As result, these relationships will soon lose all charm and attractiveness, so that we will assume the usual attitudes of exclusion, which will lead to repulsion, estrangement, struggle or, at best, to the absurd demand for complete and total approval.

Unfortunately, this has been the case in recent decades, since feminism and extreme individualism have spread bitterness, envy and mutual suspicion between men and women, pitting the sexes against each other. Therefore, as is the case with every situation that is based on these assumptions, the pleasure of demolishing and counteracting the positive image of the opposite sex has become almost a constant.

For many, too many years now, not a day goes by when the best and greatest qualities of women and their 'achievements' in all fields of study, politics, work and family are not extolled, while at the same time all male behaviour, both past and present, is denigrated and stigmatised in an often ungenerous and unfair manner. And this is not only when these acts have actually harmed, damage or could seriously damage the body, image, dignity and sensitivity of female partners, but also when they are simply 'different' and therefore require a greater effort of understanding and acceptance.

For several decades now, the enemy 'man' has become, in the eyes of many women, 'the evil being', who has enslaved the female gender in the past, 'the false and lying being', because everything he proposes and demands is aimed at bringing women back into a state of social subjection, in order to continue relegate them to a subordinate role from which they have finally freed themselves, the man has become 'the treacherous and treacherous being', ready to abandon and deceive the expectations of every woman who foolishly places trust and hope in him, and finally, 'the arrogant, aggressive and violent being', who subtly seizes the body and spirit of the girls he meets on his way, hurting and killing those who oppose his lascivious desires, whims and selfish needs. Therefore, for many decades now, the man has become the being to be protected from, the being to be controlled, feared and, when appropriate, denounced at the first signs of overpowering or violence, to avoid falling prey to its continuous nefariousness. In the testimonies collected by Belotti, men are described by their female partners as: boring, long-winded, anti-pathetic, hateful, prevaricating, stingy, mean, contemptuous, sexually selfish, conceited, competitive, complex, inhibited, conformist, sad, etc.' (Quoted by Slepj, 2005, p. 138).

But as is usually the case between 'enemies', men too have for far, far too long now developed antibodies and defences against the opposite sex, glimpsing and underlining all possible problematic or negative traits in the female being, in some way and in some cases present, in order to defend themselves and fight back. Therefore, the list of accusations against the opposite sex has also become long for men, but just as unfair and ungenerous as that drawn up by women.

The accusations against what used to be the 'fairer sex' to dream of, idealise, protect and pine for, concern haughtiness, mood instability, easy irritability and incontentiveness, as well as increasing arrogance, aggressiveness and violence, expressed in such a way that, if it is difficult or impossible to prove it before a judge, because it is made up more of words and behaviour than of physical injuries, it would often be seriously present in many relationships.

The criticism and negative judgements do not end there. Women are accused of being very fickle, of foolishly following current fashions, without making any rational assessment, so that their way of life often appears sloppy and shapeless in some, and clearly ridiculous and vulgar in others. Not to mention the lack of skills in childcare, housekeeping, and the men who, to their misfortune, tie themselves to them. Moreover, how can one trust women if they, without much thought or evaluation, are easily disposed to sentimental and sexual betrayal, following every impulse of the moment, dictated by their fickle feelings, emotions or whims? And finally, what trust is to be had in them when it is evident that many of them, having betrayed the man they claimed to love, are ready to take away not only their honour and possessions but also the love of their children?

The fact that this negative view of persons of the opposite sex can give rise to signs of mutual incomprehension and conflict, which at a later stage could lead to aggressive behaviour and acts, is something that is easily foreseeable and also difficult to avoid.

The disappearance of proper etiquette between the sexes

One of the many consequences of the continuous and unceasing struggle between men and women has been the almost total disappearance of any indications that, in past generations, were present in the etiquette between the two sexes. These indications imposed on men and women a series of precise behaviours, designed to protect, care for, respect, make the other feel good and reassure. This guidance and advice, which was given by society as a whole, but especially by the parents to their children, allowed each man and woman to have a safe base from which to move when they wanted to deal with the opposite sex, to initiate and build a harmonious, respectful and stable relationship.

Both men and women, bearing in mind their peculiar characteristics, were instructed on the best rules to protect, help, reassure, gratify, make the other sex serene and as happy as possible. These instructions were so cogent and numerous, that today they appear absolutely unbelievable and out of place. The personal episode I describe here is an example of this.

My old father had suffered from Parkinson's disease for a long time. I had made myself available to treat him personally, but given the chronic and worsening disease, the results had been modest. Therefore, taking into account my young age and my lack of experience in the field, he asked me to book him an appointment with another specialist, much older than me and certainly much more distinguished, who was visiting Rome. Naturally, I immediately agreed to his request and so I also booked the plane to the capital. The journey to Rome went without any particular problems, except

for the continuous

attention and help that I necessarily had to provide to the old parent, when he was forced to walk, sit, stand up and, above all, when he was forced to climb the aeroplane stairs which, at that time, were rather narrow and steep.

The trouble began when we arrived at the private clinic where the distinguished neurologist colleague was visiting. Because of the fact that there were so many patients in the waiting room, I had difficulty finding a chair in which to place the wobbly parent. Pleased and satisfied with my feat, I waited on my feet for the kind secretary to call us in when, after a few minutes, looking up from the magazine I had just started reading, I saw him flinch to give up his seat to a much younger and certainly much more stable woman. Fully aware of the elderly parent's motor problems and poor balance, I lost no time in looking for another place for him to sit.

Trying to relax again, I went back to reading the magazine articles when, looking up, I saw him standing again, while his place was occupied by another woman. At this point, I could not refrain from scolding him, albeit affectionately, for this imprudent gesture, pointing out that, due his motor instability, he was in danger of falling at any moment. However, I was overcome and blocked by his firm and decisive reply: 'I, a man, cannot sit quietly while a lady is standing'.

Resigned, I again went search of another chair!

Before it was his turn, the same scene repeated itself several times: invariably, while I was scrambling to find a safer place for him in whatever armchair or chair he was in, he would, with a lightning impulse, even if staggering, get up and give up his seat to every woman who entered the waiting room.

After the short visit, on my way back to the airport, I was under the illusion that the problems caused by his extreme helpfulness and politeness towards women were over, not least because there were many vacancies in the waiting rooms. However, something else caught his attention. Right next to us sat a woman no more than forty years old. Upon learning that the young lady was travelling alone, my old father's chivalrous instinct immediately emerged and he could not help but take the woman under his wing.

My demands that nothing be missing from the lonely traveller were categorical: "Do you know that there can be thieves in airports? Don't just stand there, go to the café and buy what the lady wants, she certainly can't go hungry! "Ask her if she has to go to the services, and if so, accompany her."

Even during the embarkation, he could not refrain from lending his support and services as a perfect gentleman to the woman. Thus, observers were presented with a spectacle that today would seem absolutely unbelievable: that of a young son, forced to hold a cow with one hand, while with the other he tries to help his old father with his hand.

who, unbalanced, climbs up the steps of a steep aircraft ladder, risking a fall at any moment, while the latter, for his part, cannot help but hold tightly in his hand the briefcase of a young woman who, with a quick, confident and graceful manner, precedes the whole group!

The old gentleman's task only ended when, having arrived at Catania airport, he was able to hand over to the young lady's parent, safe and sound, his daughter, whom he had cared for and protected throughout the journey.

We say a scene that is hardly credible today, since such behaviour is not only not valued, but has long been abhorred and even completely abolished by both men and women. Everyone, whether man or woman, no matter whether young or old, feels entitled to behave towards the opposite sex as he or she pleases at the time, without taking into account the sensitivities and expectations of those he or she is supposed to respect and, above all, without taking into account the needs and requirements of those in front of him or standing next to him. If men do not think at all about giving way to women on the bus or the metro, nor are they willing to pay their friend's bill at the restaurant or carry their partner's books when they go to school together, women, for their part, are not at all willing to reciprocate the other sex with any other kindness or courtesy. Each of them, locked in their own selfishness, thinks rather about how to defend and offend than how best to help, assist and please the other.

With such behaviour, it is easy to understand how between the two sexes the attitudes that

make one suffer rather than those that make one rejoice. It is equally easy to imagine how much more numerous are the behaviours that make those around us insecure, irritable and aggressive, rather than the gestures and words that reassure, soothe and protect. The willingness to make a small or large sacrifice, in order to be close and care for others, is considered a relic of distant historical periods, when men and women were slaves to such altruistic and chivalrous behaviour and attitudes.

All this has happened, as we know very well, when equality in the dignity and responsibility of the sexes has been transformed into equality in roles, attitudes, aspirations, desires, attitudes and behaviour. "If the woman next to me, man, is like me, why should I give her my seat on the bus or underground? Why should I use language that is attentive to her sensitivities? Why should I exempt her from the most difficult, burdensome, dirty or dangerous tasks and jobs? Why should I protect and reassure her? Get by!"

On the other hand, even many women, if not all of them, who have become, at least apparently, confident and strong in their ideas of equality, would no longer accept to be treated with gentleness and attention reserved for their mothers and grandmothers of the past; just as they would not accept to be exempted from the most dangerous and burdensome jobs; nor would they want to be excluded from listening to the most spicy and dangerous stories, swearwords and jokes.

These masculine behaviours, which were once spontaneous and natural, would today be judged as a coming

It would mean that they would be treated as 'old-fashioned women' and not as strong, self-confident, courageous, fearless, fully free and emancipated women who have no need of protection and care from the opposite sex.

The same is true for the female sex: 'If the man next to me is like me, if men and women are equal, why should I be attentive to his needs? Why should I respect his sensitivity to issues and situations that may upset him or put him at a disadvantage? Why should I be careful not to solicit his jealousy? Why should I respect his dignity, his virility and his honour? Why should I renounce dressing as I please, using the language I wish, behaving with the camaraderie that pleases me, just because these things bother him and the other men? And why should I care for him, prepare his food, wash and iron his laundry, if he can do all these things himself, with his own hands?

This other episode can better clarify what kind of relations between the sexes we have helped to co-construct in recent years.

As we know nowadays when we are on the train, on the car bus or on the metro, we are forced to listen to what our neighbour is saying, whether we want to or not, using our mobile phones. I usually try to distance myself and not follow what is said around me, both out of annoyance and a certain sense of modesty. However, on a recent train journey I was unable to do this. Too strange and bizarre.

sarre were the phrases I listened to from the man sitting me, in order to put them out of my mind. This man, in his fifties, well-dressed and clean-shaven, with a cheerful and satisfied face, who by the way, I later learned, was in charge of an important and responsible job, did nothing but record and send voice messages with very strange phrases: 'You know what you do, Salvatore? That cat of your ex's, throw him out of the house and then you can always tell her that he ran away'. And right after that, another message: 'Or, listen, Salvatore, you can do even better: invite your ex-girlfriend to lunch and serve her the cat baked in the oven with a side dish of chips, but don't tell her anything until after lunch. And again: 'OK, if you don't want to do it yourself, let the cat in when your pit bull is free, around the house and wait for him to maul it'.

During the trip, he laughed and explained to me that his friend's ex-wife had gone on holiday and had entrusted him with the care of her cat. And since this task was not to the friend's liking, he had felt obliged to give him some valuable and useful advice!

Of course, this was said with a smile and one hopes that he did not mean it when he urged his friend to make his ex-wife enjoy that particular menu. However, the kind of relationships that today often exist between men and women, especially between separated people, are sometimes of this nature.

The rise of infidelity

When the amorous understanding, which is established between a man and a woman, becomes concrete in an im-

The stable and privileged relationship with the partner, which becomes concrete in the engagement and then, even more so, in the marriage, lives dialogue, exchange, solidarity, complicity, support and mutual support. This relationship, above all, lives and is sustained by a condition of stability and continuity, which are indispensable for the emergence of trust, esteem, love and mutual giving.

Since the faithfulness of one stimulates in the other the need to reciprocate such responsible, attentive and respectful behaviour, a stable and exclusive relationship between the two sexes is fundamental to building basic trust in the other, but also to having a positive outlook on love relationships. When all this is lacking, when the bond with person we love and value is marred by infidelity and betrayal, when one of the two establishes with others the unqualified relationship and bond that should be the foundation of any healthy and responsible couple, then we can only expect traumatic and serious consequences. Of these consequences, the most dramatic and destructive is certainly the emergence or escalation of aggressive and violent behaviour.

Various types of infidelity are described.

Relational infidelity

This is due to dissatisfaction in one's relationship with one's partner because of a lack of sexual understanding, communication, understanding or mutual support. In these cases, the understanding and productive dialogue between the two people is deteriorated due to dormant or completely extinguished feelings, which do not allow the amorous impulses to offer.

The impoverishment or weariness of life in twos not only no longer bears positive fruit for both of them, but also becomes a reason for continuous suffering and sadness, due to the emergence of malevolent and destructive attitudes, but also to the onset of morbid jealousy, aggression and mutual spite.

All this makes the home a place of confrontation and not of encounter, and life in two is not a way of helping each other but of hurting each other, through constant spite and nastiness towards each other, no holds barred. The relationship risks becoming an instrument to take something away from the other, to humiliate and attack the other and certainly not to gratify him and give him joy, security and fulfilment.

Compensatory infidelity

Unfaithful people of this type try to fill the gap they feel in their cohabitation or marriage by investing in a complementary and compensatory relationship (Le Van C. and Le Gall D., 2011, p. 30). Ultimately, the cheater maintains the less than perfect and satisfactory marital relationship in order to avoid the break-up of the marriage, which would have serious financial consequences and serious consequences for the children and the social environment, but at the same time, he or she seeks a relationship outside of the couple, sometimes very fleeting, such as with a prostitute, or stable over time with a lover, which in some way compensates for the shortcomings in the relationship with the partner.

Infidelity as a pretext

This type of infidelity is practised by both sexes, but especially by women, who judge it to be the quickest and most suitable instrument for breaking up a marriage, knowing full well that it is difficult for a man to forgive a blatant sexual or sentimental betrayal.

Infidelity for revenge

In this case, one cheats in order to take revenge for a wrong done, so that the other person feels the same pain and suffering. Wrongs may relate to the emotional and sexual sphere, but they may also relate to broken covenants and conditions, violence or even simply unfulfilled demands and whims on the part of the partner.

Neurotic infidelity

One of the neurotic forms of living in couple relationships is to continually look for other alternative people, neglecting, for no particular reason, the one one is already living with and with whom, perhaps, a family has already been formed. In these cases, the subject is indeed satisfied with his or her partner but feels an incoercible need to experience other alternative stories (Le Van and Le Gall, 2011, p.31). (Le Van and Le Gall, 2011, p. 31). Sometimes it is merely an unconscious need to prove oneself, before others, as charming, seductive or virile. Other neurotic behaviour is often carried out by men and women of a certain age, who leave their wives or husbands to remarry or live with someone much younger than themselves. This behaviour can be seen as a desire to test, prove and support their seductive abilities and their inability to accept the passing of time, but also the need of awakening,

in the encounter with a young body, the last flashes of sentimental and sexual emotions that have grown old and therefore long since died out. These people often go from the exaltation they feel at the conquest of a younger and more beautiful partner to the deepest, blackest depression, when the initial enthusiasm fades, the novelty and passion lose their bite or they no longer want to be subjected to humiliating blackmail.

Neurotic needs are the result of a human upbringing and training that pays little attention to the needs and needs of children. When they then enter adult life, they bring with them a personality disturbed by unresolved inner conflicts, so that they are easy prey and victims of frankly immature dreams and behaviour. If one adds to this childish personality type the lack an educational background rich in fundamental values such as honour, loyalty, responsibility, fairness, commitment to others and to society, one can understand the behaviour of these people very well.

Multiple infidelity

Some, when they cannot find the perfect person to love, who can fully satisfy all their aesthetic, social, economic, sexual and sentimental needs, hope to obtain the perfect woman or man by dating several people. In this way, they can take one or more sought-after and desired qualities from each of them. Ultimately, *the multiple infidel* deludes himself to create, as in a jigsaw puzzle, the dreamed man or woman by taking from one person the sculptural body, from another the lively intelligence, from another the money or culture,

by yet another the amatory skills and so on. Needless to say, this is just an illusion, because like it or not, it is impossible to separate the positive from the negative aspects in any relationship. For this reason, the multiple infidel will be forced to accept, along with the merits, the flaws of each person he or she is seeing.

Infidelity from loneliness and distance.

In our globalised society, adultery caused by the physical distance from one's partner for work reasons is frequent. The men and women who move away from home for work over six hundred thousand in Italy. They are called 'family pen- doloers'. Couples are separated for most of the week by hundreds, if not miles, of kilometres, having only telephones, video calls and text messages as their only relational link. In these 'commuter families', most often the children stay with the mother, while the father stays away for most of the week in another city or sometimes in another region, if not another state, only to return to the family on Friday evening or Saturday morning. Although more rarely, the opposite may be the case, whereby it is the father who stays with the children, who are in fact mainly looked after by their grandparents, and it is the wife who, at weekends, leaves to join her husband.

In these cases, the two partners find themselves alone for long periods of time, in different environments and in different cities, and relate to different people for many days. This can undoubtedly favour *comforting betrayal*, caused by loneliness and increased psychological fragility. This situation can

however, cause a serious and irremediable fracture in the couple over time.

In addition to loneliness and psychological fragility, in the above-mentioned cases, the reasons for infidelity can also arise from the conflicts that arise when one or both of them wish that the other, by giving up his or her job or managing it differently, could have given up moving to another city and remained close to the family.

The 'throwaway' or 'hit run' infidelity.

If, as we said above, in some periods and in some societies, infidelity can arise because of loneliness, lack of fellowship and dialogue, lack of attention to the other's needs or neurosis, whereby the unfaithful partner feels somehow justified in his or her behaviour, in our historical period, with the massive spread of sexual and sentimental freedom, infidelity has taken on other and more serious characteristics.

Some people, and there are many today, see life and relationships with others in an extremely simplistic, individualistic and hedonistic way. Therefore, not believing in monogamy or fidelity, they feel entitled to have romantic and sexual relationships with whomever, whenever, without any ethical or moral problems. These people think that submitting to the moral law means repression (Harding, 1951, p. 281).

The reasons are many:

1. In Western societies, religious and moral norms have long since lost their ability to direct private behaviour. The goodness of an action is judged by what one expects to obtain at that moment and not by whether that action is just or unjust, whether it conforms to the dictates of conscience or not, whether it is morally licit or not. Ultimately, the harm that the action may cause to the person doing it, or to others, is not taken into account or is largely underestimated. In an orgy of consumerism, individualism, unbridled freedom, without any point of reference to a moral value system that transcends the individual, it is the person himself who creates his own values. "It used to be society that judged a certain sexual relationship moral or immoral, just or unjust; today individuals have taken upon themselves this right to judge" (Harding, 1951, p. 212). The ultimate criterion distinguishing good from evil is suggested by self-realisation and the immediate satisfaction of one's desires and needs. For these reasons, everyone is granted the possibility of making every sentimental and sexual choice totally and easily reversible, according to one's desires and needs of the moment. Ultimately, everyone is given the opportunity to retrace their steps, so that they are fully free in their various and multiple relationships. Therefore, when one feels that a romantic or sexual situation, which is nowadays simply called 'history', is not sufficiently valid and fulfilling, it can be easily interrupted at any time with a simple message.

without the slightest concern for the consequences that this type of behaviour can have for the people involved, for minors and for society as a whole. According to Harding (1951, p. 209): 'The chaos that reigns in sexual morality today is a thoroughly modern fact. In other ages the code changed with the passing of the centuries; but in general, all those who found themselves in the same circumstances kept to same code'.

2. Love is often reduced to mere momentary infatuation, if not to immediate sensual satisfaction. Having abolished every rule, every duty, every moral or religious obligation, as well as every rule of behaviour, and having silenced all feelings of guilt, in order to pursue the dream and the desire for everlasting happiness or at least some hour or moment of pleasure, there is nothing left but to choose the person who most pleases and attracts us or whom we yearn to meet at that moment, even if, objectively, it is only the whim of a moment. Thus, in order to satisfy our every immediate interest, desire or whim, endless choices and changes are possible. Among other things, this multiplicity of choices is seen by our modern western society as something modern, as it tends to break the rigid patterns and dictates of the past. For this reason, the choice of a partner, regardless of whether they are already engaged, married or cohabiting, is considered by large sections of society to be not only natural, but also appropriate to our times.
3. Another cause of the continuous and incessant search for other people with whom to have 'hit and run'

relationships

is given by the numerous messages we receive every day from rampant consumerism. Messages that urge us to replace and change everything that does not meet our desires and needs of the moment. Therefore, if the woman or man with whom we have established a relationship does not give us what we expect at that moment, it is right and sacrosanct to look for another woman or man, who offers us what we desire and seek at that moment.

4. Added to this are the stimuli present in a society based on feelings and emotions of the moment. This type of society teaches one to despise and discard any relationship that is tired and disappointing, lacking that passion and bite that it had during the period of falling in love, just like a 'disposable' commodity, and since it is well known that over time, the decline of passion in a couple is not only physiological but also expected, it is evident in this environment very few relationships have a chance of being saved and lasting.
5. There is also another element that should not be underestimated, and that is the widespread conviction of a petty psychology, little or no science, that links our personal malaise to the people we associate with at that moment. It is as if to say: 'If you are not happy, rather you are sad, anxious, suffer from psychosomatic disorders, know that almost always, these problems are due to the people you associate with. Therefore, to cure your mood, your anxiety, your depression, it is necessary to change your life. Above all, it is necessary to replace the people who are close to you, because they are certainly the cause.

of your illnesses'. This is very often not true, as most of our psychological problems have a long history.

6. The easy hit-and-run relationships are also due to the fracture of that game of the parts linked to sexual roles. It is no longer men who 'try it on', while women more critically and with more healthy discernment select and judge, and for the most part refuse to let themselves be carried away by inconclusive or negative adventures, but 'all together passionately', men and women in search of 'stories' that bring, even if only for a few days, a few hours or a few minutes, passion, pleasure and violent emotions, consumed quickly, which end just as quickly, leaving a lot of bitterness in the mouth.

For these reasons, whereas until a few years ago, sentimental and sexual freedom was shrouded in the need to respond to love impulse and therefore the strong statement: 'Go where your heart takes you'; or even 'The heart wants what the heart wants', sentimental motivation is no longer necessary today. The 'I just like it' serves to shut the mouth of anyone who dares to criticise or limit any hyper-liberal attitude and behaviour. "I just like" that man, that woman, that gay, that lesbian, that transsexual. "I just like it." And it does not matter if next to me or the person I like to have as a lover, there is someone who has invested in that relationship dreams, thoughts, feelings and years of their life. It does not matter if there are children who will suffer and cry out their bewilderment, disquiet and anger. "I just like it". Those four simple little words are enough to chase away all

criticism and guilt even towards family networks. Per Pirrone (2014, pp. 54-55):

"The love relationship takes on a variety of forms, becoming a shapeless and changing reality, with no more characterising traits, not even those of sexual difference - contested by homosexual culture and recent gender theories - or the personal generation of children, circumvented by artificial fertilisation technologies! The ever-increasing flexibility of being together, the ever-increasing belief that everything is relative, is reflected, for instance, in a new form love relationship, called 'Living Apart Together' (Living Not Together) LAT, which complements the already existing forms of cohabitation without marriage. In this type of relationship, couples decide to live in separate houses.¹

On the other hand, finding someone or someone else who is open to this kind of relationship has become extremely easy. It is possible to 'hook up' with another on the street, on the bus or in the metro. It is possible to do so in the work environment, as in the gym or disco. In every place there is the possibility of short, stinctive and pleasant encounters. In order to make contact, meet and initiate not one but a multiplicity of 'stories' that may end in a few days or even in a few minutes of sex in the toilets of some club, there is the possibility of using the Internet and other electronic media. These technological tools, which are now present in every home, as well as in every pocket or handbag, are ready to make available and offer, at any time of the day, the possibility of a sexual encounter.

¹In Italy, according to ISTAT data from 2003, the percentage of LAT couples in the over-40 age group was 4.8%.

day and night, hundreds of real and virtual dating sites, which you can frequent more or less protected by anonymity. If all this is not enough, one can use the various social networks and chats, with which one can send and receive hundreds of captivating messages. Therefore, looking for each other, finding each other, falling in love or simply having sex, from the comfort of one's own home, office or workplace, has become very easy and immediate over the past few decades.

To attract and provoke the attention of the other, a sculpted body can be useful. And this can be achieved by frequenting crowded gyms or by starting endless diets. In addition to a perfect body, one can resort to various stratagems, including the use of numerous explicit verbal and non-verbal communications aimed at the other. Often, in an atmosphere of complete freedom and friendship, smiles, attitudes and winks are wasted, which convey signals of emotional, amorous or simply sexual availability.

In the same way, it is accepted and encouraged, because so does everyone, to wear clothes that surprise, provoke, attract, seduce. Clothes and accessories that stimulate interest and desires, so as to entice the other person to allow himself or herself to make the longed-for approaches. Clothing, therefore, that highlights, enhances and uncovers the parts of the body that can provoke intense sexual stimulation. And all this not only without any scruples about modesty, but also without the slightest concern that these messages might also be received by people we would not want to meet on our way.

However, despite our need for sociability and true and deep dialogue, despite the ease of starting a relationship, we also settle for very poor sexual experiences that verge on the ridiculous, such as swapping couples or, even worse, the use of rubber dolls and erotic robots.

The consequences

Betrayal is never without a certain amount of suffering. The experiences of the betrayed person may be many, but they are always very painful, if not dramatic and traumatic.

- There is, first of all, a mourning to be processed because we have left a comrade and yet an unknowing part remains attached to him.
- Infidelity undermines interpersonal dialogue, since communication between the two partners, lacking the same basis on which to rest, grow and nourish, represented by mutual loyalty, is in danger of fading or even dying out.
- The betrayal suffered simultaneously undermines trust in others and in oneself: "What does he have that I do not have?", "What does he have to give that I cannot give?", "What has he seen that I have not seen in him? With a torn soul one discovers that one does not know the other. One sees the beloved person different from how one has always thought of him or her. Ultimately, the positive mental image of the one who is physically close to us, the one we are supposed to love and respect, is debased and compromised. One discovers that one does not know oneself and one's own qualities, there

one feels weak and powerless. Betrayal is, in fact, a defeat that generates anguished doubts about one's personal qualities or abilities in choosing the person to love.

- Infidelity generates doubts about the purpose of one's own existence: what is the point of life if one even trust the person one loves and who said they loved us?
- Infidelity diminishes the sense of one's own responsibility: 'If being serious and faithful leads to these consequences, it is better not to be responsible and to take from life and from others whatever happens, when it happens, without any problems'.
- One of the most serious consequences of betrayal is the destabilisation of the betrayed person's psyche, as this behaviour manages to defeat certainties: such as trust in others, in being a couple and that love is forever.
- Infidelity stimulates the other to betray in turn. The person who has been betrayed, in order to console himself, in order to improve his self-esteem, in order to take revenge and reciprocate the evil received, is likely to seek, in turn, to take an interest in and attach himself to another.
- Infidelity stimulates feelings of revenge. "How can I reciprocate the evil has been done to me? What is the dearest that he/she cares about that I can take away from him/her: children, money, honour, life?"
- With infidelity comes increased restlessness and anxiety. The human soul is very complex and sensitive and has very clear and well-defined basic needs that it cannot do without. When can-

If we are able to count on the love of another person, in a stable and continuous way, we feel a warm sense of security that allows us to live our relational and working life with fullness and serenity; when, on the other hand, we live in relationships that do not have the characteristics of stability and continuity, intense anxieties and disturbing fears very easily arise and creep into our minds. These are all emotions and feelings that are difficult to manage, which often degenerate into bitterness and aggression towards the other person who has not wanted or not been able to build something solid and lasting, something important with us.

- Betrayal stimulates aggressive and violent feelings directed not only towards the person who betrayed us but also reflexively towards absolutely innocent people: such as one's own or the other's parents, children, friends.

Jealousy

Closely related to the previous topic is that of jealousy.

This emotion, which takes the form of the fear of losing the other or something that the other has given us or could offer us, is a reality present in every relationship, in all ages, in all peoples and in all historical eras.

We know that the child feels jealousy towards the newborn sibling or towards the one particularly loved by one or both parents. The child is jealous when daddy kisses mummy. Students are jealous of the classmates most liked by

their teachers. È

The teenage girl is jealous when her partner prefers to sit in the pew with another. The mother is jealous when her son shows more attention and affection towards her non-niece than towards her. Children can be jealous of one or both parents when, as is increasingly the case nowadays, after a separation or divorce, dad and mum start 'affairs' with new 'friends' and 'girlfriends', 'boyfriends' or 'girlfriends', 'boyfriends' and 'girlfriends'. Finally, the employee is jealous when the office manager shows more trust in the newcomer than in him. In these and many other cases, aggression, which is frequently expressed, is aimed at protecting from others the people, feelings or things considered important for one's personal, social and relational life.

Why be surprised, then, if one jealous of one's partner in love and romance when fears, thinks or is certain that he or she can offer or has offered to another the presence, love, care, affection and even sexual manifestations that he or she used to offer only to us? Why should we be surprised, then, if the aggression born of jealousy is aroused against those who undermine our role as father or mother, husband or wife, or against those who have destroyed or intend to destroy our family, which we have dreamt of and fantasized about since childhood and which we have succeeded in building at the cost of immense effort and self-denial?

It is only when we know that we can count on the love of another person in a stable and continuous way that we feel that warm sense of security that allows us to live our relational and working lives with fullness and serenity. On the other hand, when relationships, especially those of a particularly intentional nature, are not

and involving, do not have the characteristics of stability and continuity, anxieties, fears, insecurities and anxieties are inevitable. Emotions and feelings that often generate and translate into jealousy and bitterness towards the other person who was unwilling or unable to build something solid and lasting, but also towards the person who took something very important away from us.

The fear, or worse, the realisation that the presence, affections, emotions and feelings that the loved one gave us, could be enjoyed by others, can trigger, as in fact frequently happens, intense aggressive and destructive emotions, made up of anger and rage, not always controllable and controlled. These negative emotions can only stigmatise and sometimes, unfortunately, trigger violent and destructive thoughts of revenge against those who have left us to give their love, their bodies, their care and their possessions to others, but also against those who have taken away or deprived us of something necessary and important to us, but which we also feel somehow belongs to us. On these occasions, it is easy to expect greater irritability, aggression and mistrust towards everyone, but especially towards the sexual gender that the other represents: 'All men are...'. "All women are ...'.

As for the other mode, which is often suggested, namely that of indifference and absolute control of one's emotions, which in plain and vulgar terms translates into: "Who cares, he/she does what he/she wants, I will do the same', is an even worse modality than the first, as it leads to anaesthesia of feelings and emotions. Anaesthesia that renders human relationships, even the most intimate and profound ones, totally cold and empty.

By the way, for some authors this is practically impossible for a person with normal mental equilibrium.

"Jealousy depends on attachment to people and things and is proportional to their importance. Love and jealousy are two sides of the same reality: anyone who claims to love a woman so much as to desire only her happiness, even with another, is mad masochist, a delusional rationalist" (Andreoli, 1995, p. 283).

Physiological and pathological jealousy

It is often debated today, as in the past, whether or not jealousy is acceptable in relationships. The detractors of this feeling judge jealousy very harshly. For them, it is not love, but possession; on the contrary, it is regarded as 'the poison of love', 'the feeling that destroys love', 'an explicit form of lack of trust and respect for one's neighbour', 'something that can destroy understanding between the sexes', 'but also something that can, among other things, trigger conflicts that are difficult to solve and can lead to tragedy'. For these reasons, detractors of jealousy think that individuals who get caught up in this feeling are certainly psychologically disturbed and repressed people, but they are also backward people who still harbour silly possessive feelings.

Others, on the other hand, believe that this feeling was not invented by possessive and selfish men and women, but that it is fundamental to the well-being of individuals, families and society. They also believe that a bit of jealousy flatters the partner, making him or her feel important, even essential to the other's well-being, and that demonstrations of jealousy are a way of making the partner feel good.

jealousy are healthy and gratifying, as they ultimately demonstrate demonstrations of love.

On the other hand, how can we forget that man, like all animals, also possesses the instinct to protect what is his, what is dear to him, what is indispensable to his physical and mental health? Ultimately, attacking those who threaten us, those who take something important away from us or disregard our feelings and needs, is a fundamental instinctive behaviour for the survival of the individual and the species.

The prevalence of this feeling makes us think, therefore, that *physiological jealousy* is natural and normal, since it has precise and important purposes in every relationship. It arises, we repeat, from the instinctive need to have the person or persons who can give us their affection, love, passion, care and attention at our side at all times, and thus serves to defend what is fundamental or otherwise important to us. This feeling is, after all, one of many mechanisms to protect and safeguard us against the loss of something essential to our life or our physical and mental well-being.

From the social point of view, jealousy is a fundamental element in making relationships more stable, relationships, especially those that are the very foundation of society, such as emotional and sexual relationships, for which stability is indispensable, both for the psychological well-being of each member of the relationship, be it man, woman or child, and for building and successfully conducting a serious and functional family project.

On the contrary, all societies such as ours, in which situations of emotional instability are frequent and numerous, are also those in which personal, existential and social problems such as depression, anxiety, withdrawal, but also violent and aggressive feelings and behaviour, are more frequent. The reason for this is simple to understand: when one fears, or worse, realises that the gifts of those close to one's heart may be enjoyed by others, it is easy for destructive emotions of anger and rage, which cannot always be controlled and controlled, or, on the contrary, depressive feelings of apathy, asthenia and withdrawal, to be unleashed.

As far as *pathological jealousy* is concerned, this is easily recognisable because its manifestations are not linked to the person's external reality, but are the result of disturbed or altered inner conflicts and psychological pathways. This type of jealousy is, among other things, easily recognisable, due to the presence of excessive and abnormal projections and defences in insecure and anxious individuals, not only with regard to others, but especially with regard to themselves and their own abilities and qualities.

Despite this, people continue to fight physiological jealousy without realising the tragic consequences. Incidentally, few mild regulations are in place under Italian state law to try to reduce the opportunities for betrayal. On the contrary, it is severely punished who violates privacy. Punished are husbands or wives, boyfriends or girlfriends who look into their partner's mobile phone or have the other person checked and photographed in order to exclude or confirm a betrayal. The husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, who dares to manifest

suspicious about the fidelity of the partner. One applauds all the applications of electronic devices on the market, which make contact between the sexes increasingly easy and affordable for everyone.

This exaggerated defence of the individual and not of the emotional, sexual and sentimental relationships that he or she experiences has disastrous consequences for people's relational lives since emotions and feelings cannot be suppressed, only repressed. For this reason, crusades against jealousy diminish the healthier and more physiological manifestations of this feeling, while they accentuate the number and severity of the more serious and pathological manifestations.

Therefore, if one spouse cannot check the other spouse's mobile phone or e-mail to prevent and avoid an initial relationship that could lead to adultery, when this then takes place, shattering and destroying the couple's understanding but also the families concerned, the law itself is forced to intervene in its tragic consequences. It is forced to intervene in disputes between spouses; in separation, divorce and child custody; and it is forced to take care of psychological problems of minors, people involved and the poverty of one or both spouses. Clearly, this will result in a considerable economic burden on individuals, civil society and the state.

In many cases, the absolute lack of co-prevention will later force the law to intervene even in so-called 'madness dramas', in which exasperated and humiliated husbands hurt, assault or kill their children, their wives and even themselves, while the latter are equally exacerbated,

unload their aggression on children by beating them, killing them or depriving them of their right to continue to have a stable and fruitful relationship with their father.

Physical and emotional detachment

Another important situation in which aggression can easily arise is physical and emotional separation. In the past, with the exception of emigrants, the situation of separation between spouses existed almost exclusively during the summer holidays. In this period, while the wives and children were on holiday at some seaside resort, the husbands, still working, stayed in town for a few more days. When the family gathered at weekends, his work stress was already clearly felt, as he was forced to live in the city without the comfort and closeness of his wife and children, and her tiredness was also evident, as she had to deal with all the problems of raising and caring for the children on a daily basis without the support and help of her man. This provoked easy quarrels and arguments, also due to frequent and easy motives of jealousy.

At the present time, the situation has worsened considerably. There are many couples who live apart constantly for almost the entire year, due to the increasing commuting, which forces the man to work in another city from Monday to Friday, while the wife, again for work or study reasons, moves close to the marital home and returns in the evening, tired and disheartened, to look after the children. In other situations it is even worse: he is busy in a city hundreds of kilometres away from the

marital home and the same happens to her, while the children, who study and go to school, are cared for by their grandparents, who make themselves available with difficulty to make up for their parents' absence.

Even if the aim is to reunite, this distance is not without its negative effects: it increases the tension in the couple; it aggravates dissatisfaction with one's role as husband or wife, father or mother; exacerbates conflicts for reasons of jealousy: "What is he doing all alone in another city?" "Are we sure that when she goes out in the evening with a friend, she really only goes out with a friend, or is there not also a friend there?" All this only accentuates mutual dissatisfaction, suspicions conflicts, which can also be followed by mild or severe aggressive manifestations.

Emotional detachment can be caused not only by physical distance but also by emotional-relational distance. This is not only due to work, but also to other social, political or recreational commitments, which often create considerable emotional involvement, it impossible to experience intimacy and dialogue within the couple properly. In these cases, love relationships are made difficult by careerism, personal ambition, the desire possessions and prestige, and the pursuit of frequent, selfish pastimes. This leads to an abuse of one's physical and mental energies, which may be followed by quarrels. These are triggered when the other person feels deprived of necessary dialogue and attention. It is very easy for people who are overworked or over-committed to other commitments to bring the fatigue, anxieties, frustrations, debasement and thoughts accumulated during the day into their families and relationships.

Added to this, in recent years, is the constant presence of electronic devices at all hours of the day and night, which distract the attention of those who feel compelled to respond to friends, girlfriends or workmates, who systematically and continuously write or send voice or video messages on various social networks. This creates irritation, resentment, worry and discontent in the partner, who feels neglected and sidelined in favour of others, when he/she would be entitled to more dialogue, listening and more constant togetherness and communion. In turn, the latter, who suffers from a lack of affection and dialogue, tired and discouraged, is stimulated to use aggressive behaviour and attitudes, either as a means of reproach and punishment, or as an extreme attempt to get his due.

Such behaviour sometimes achieves its purpose, whereby the other responds positively to the partner's legitimate protests, however, the gap in the relationship may widen if the other cannot resist the dependency on the smart phone. In such cases, it is as if he or she is saying: 'What you ask is right, but I can't help responding to those who contact me. I will never be able to give you that great love that you want, I will never be able to give you all the passion that you seek, get over it! In still other cases, resentment accusations and even abandonment may arise from this dependency: 'You prevent or hinder me when I am in contact with my friends and girlfriends; there is no doubt that this is a brutal, selfish and overbearing action: therefore, it is better to break up'.

Aggressiveness from excessive expectations

If the expectations we have of life in general, of the opposite sex, of love feelings and of the qualities of the people we meet and fall in love with, and if the expectations present in a stable union, such as marriage, are realistic, our life will certainly be more serene and acceptable, because everything that the partner or the relationship can give us will seem important, indeed valuable. Therefore, the satisfaction we will derive from it will certainly compensate for any frustrations. If, on the contrary, expectations are excessive; if we are not easily satisfied with others and life offer us, if our desires and aspirations easily lead us into the world of illusions, so that we think that we will be able to obtain from the person we love the ultimate in perfection, love, kindness, acceptance, thoughtfulness and honesty, then, as we allow ourselves to be carried away by a series of unrealisable dreams, it is very likely that dissatisfaction, discouragement and bitter disappointment will arise.

As a result, aggression, resentment and anger may arise in our souls, towards life in general, but especially towards those closest to us, whom we hold responsible for not having granted us what we had hoped, desired and imagined. All this can only result in continuous grievances, which can create the preconditions for unstable and precarious relationships as well as for aggressive and violent behaviour.

Illusions in the affective-relational field are many:

1. *Believing that the passion felt at the beginning of the relationship remains unchanged over time.*

We know very well that changes for the better or for the worse due to age, constant new experiences and situations that life subjects us to, such as illness, job loss, a new pregnancy, or facing difficult situations and embarrassing confrontations, are the norm and not the exception. Therefore, rather than getting angry, reticent and opposed to change, rigidly defending the *status quo*, we should be ready to challenge and adapt to it.

2. *Believing that if someone loves us, they will always be able to understand our every need, feeling, emotion and desire.*

Love, when it is true and real, is a very strong and powerful feeling. However, even when we have managed to express our dreams and desires to our partner in a clear and obvious way, we are unlikely to always find him or her willing accept and fulfil them fully.

3. *Believing that out of love the other can distort their personality characteristics to fit ours.*

There are always unbearable faults that we would like to erase in the person we love, because they make us nervous, irritated or hurt. At the same time, we would like the other person to acquire, if not all, a good part of the characteristics we want and desire. In reality, this hope is not totally in vain. Some small change in the behaviour of the person with whom we are in a loving relationship is possible; what is illusory is that it will happen.

a radical change. It is then necessary to make careful choices, before starting a love relationship, rather than asking for love, at a later stage, for an impossible change.

4. *Believing that the other person has the qualities we see during the falling in love phase.*

One of the main illusions concerns the falling in love phase. Books, many films, soap operas and magazines, with or without glossy paper, have over the years suggested to us, to the point of convincing many of us, that everything we believe and dream, when we are in the throes of a shattering passion, is something real and concrete, when we should know very well that it is not. Emotions, even very intense ones, experienced during falling in love, are often real mental illusions, in which our dreams, our inner needs, desires and aspirations are projected onto another person and thus become real and concrete for us, but only for us and only during this particular, rosy period. The body that we embrace is certainly real and concrete, but the most intimate and profound part of that person in those moments almost totally eludes us and only later will we have to learn to know, understand and accept it.

5. *Believing that there is somewhere in the world a woman and man who are a perfect fit for us.*

Some people waste their entire lives searching for 'the other half of the apple', i.e. the person who can not only understand them fully but is also willing to satisfy and satisfy all or almost all of their needs and desires. However, these desires and needs in our time have become so numerous and often conflicting.

that it would truly be a miracle to find someone who could really satisfy them. Therefore, we believe it is much more convenient to commit oneself to love and to make a stable and productive bond with a person who, while having limitations and flaws, also has merits that we can discover, cultivate and enhance.

6. *Believing that being together or getting married is source of everlasting joy, if not complete and total happiness.*

This belief leads us to think that the beloved person has a duty to give us all the joy and happiness we know and aspire to. In this case, not enough thought is given to the fact that even a state of sufficient inner well-being depends on many factors, only partly related to the present reality. Many elements of our well-being or malaise depend more on past experiences than on those of the present. Therefore, the loved one can only help us to live better and more serenely, but cannot change, except to a small extent, our deepest inner experiences, when these are the result of traumas or psychic disturbances that have their origin in our distant past.

The desire for power and possession

Another motive that stimulates couples to aggressive behaviour is related to accentuated desire to exert power over the other. The motive of power and possession is frequently originated by the impelling childish desire to demand for oneself a position of greater control over others or to exclusively possess an object, a job, a role or a function.

These behaviours are very frequent in children, whereby the older brother likes to snatch the ball from the hands of the weaker and defenceless younger brother, not because the latter will not allow him to play but only to exert power over him. As if to say: 'I am bigger and stronger than you. I am the one who commands, you are the one who must obey'. In turn, the youngest child, if he is clever enough, can also exercise his power over the eldest, crying and shouting as loud as he can, so as to force the hoped-for parents to comply with his demands, taking the desired object away from the eldest sibling and giving it to him. Even in this case, although indirectly, the small child, despite being less strong and defenceless, still manages to obtain and use great power through parental authority.

These behaviours are also present in adults, when they do everything to impose their will on others. The blackmail exerted by men on women can be of this tenor: 'Let me go to football matches without protesting, or else I will leave you and go find a girl younger and more compliant than you'. Or even worse: 'Leave me and my lover alone or I will beat you up'. Female blackmails may be of a different kind, but they are just as stringent, pressing, and of the same tenor, as they contain the same lust for power: 'Clean the dishes and help me fix the kitchen if you want to make love to me tonight'. Or: "Give me the money I asked you for, if you want to see your children". Or even worse: 'If you don't give me what I asked for, I will accuse you of ill-treatment and violence and make you rot in jail for years'.

Just as when a child who has been beaten by his classmates learns that it is necessary to defend himself and beat him in turn, the same happens in relationships between adults: when one of them unjustly exerts his power over the other, the latter feels entitled to respond, exaggerating the threats or worse, the aggressive manifestations. "If you threaten to report me for violence, I will charge you with child neglect!"

This is often the case in our society and in our historical period. Because the culture of the dominance of the strongest and most overbearing has taken hold, people believe they can achieve anything, fulfil any desire, using arrogance, blackmail, bullying and threats. This type culture has also involved relations between the sexes. Bonino (2005, p. 15) says: '... there is also an easy and uninhibited resort to aggression, in an attempt to impose one's will on others, or even to destroy them when this is not possible'. For Dacquino (1994, p. 264): 'Precisely because it involves the meeting - clash of two personalities, love is also a reciprocal attempt to assert itself, so it becomes a field of challenge and competition between man and woman'.

Ultimately, when someone perceives that the other person has prevaricating behaviour, he or she feels authorised to use the same, if not more serious, negative ways to defend themselves and take revenge for the violence they have suffered. This triggers a per-verse spiral, in which aggression and violence, sometimes hidden, but more often manifest and present, can become increasingly intense, serious and destructive over time.

This desire for power developed especially when the competition between the sexes began and when the idea that roles 'must' be equal became established: in the family as in politics, at work as in relationships, on pain of feeling inferior to the other. Therefore, the just quest for women's full equality and dignity has, over time, turned into a power struggle, in which all available weapons - political, legal, psychological and physical - can be used to subjugate, crush, coerce and, if possible, annul the opposite sex. It is evident that in a situation of constant conflict, aggressive and violent behaviour between the genders is increasingly born and develops, which is difficult, if not impossible, to manage and control.

It is clear that this is not the best relational mode. Encounters between a man and a woman, but also relations between homosexuals, transsexuals and other sexual genders, should not be experienced as a terrain of conquest, confrontation and conflict, and certainly should not lead to the pre-dominance and prevarication of one sex over the other. If this type of behaviour is used, the chances of living well and in peace in relationships will become increasingly rare or lacking altogether. These encounters and relationships should, on the contrary, enable the development of mutual understanding, help and support, which is not only useful but, I would say, indispensable for living and working together, hand in hand, in an atmosphere of serenity and peace.

Defence of rights and little inclination to duties.

In today's society, one of the reasons for aggression between the sexes is the considerable increase in acts and behaviour that are considered to be

necessary for the defence certain rights, considered important and sacrosanct by one of the two, while they are not considered as such, are not accepted, and are therefore obstructed in various ways, by the other. When the latter does not grant what is requested, the impelling need arises to exert revenge or spite in such a way that compensates for the 'injustice' suffered or the suffering experienced.

What are considered to be one's 'rights' may derive from personal needs, the feelings one has at the time, the traditions and roles a person receives, state laws, court rulings and so on, and may vary according to age, gender and local customs. Therefore, each person, in the various ages of life, has personal needs that he or she does not want and does not intend to give up.

Those who are supposed to fulfil these needs are often the people we love most, who, however, are not always able to fulfil them. Let us give a few examples.

For children, rights are often due to the need and joy of discovering the world around them and the pleasure of experiencing themselves: their sensory capabilities, physical strength, motor agility. Young children intensely feel the right to discover and get to know what other living beings, objects, materials and tools in the world around them are like. They do this by running and jumping from one part of the house to another; by taking apart and often destroying toys, drawing and colouring where they can, making up stories, persecuting the poor animals in the house, towards the

which do not give up the pleasure of pulling their tails and ears or of hugging them so hard that they hurt.

And woe betide anyone who does not accept their insatiable desire and pleasure for research and discovery. When parents or grandparents call their attention to them, asking them to stop playing the game or the experience they are currently conducting, because it is not right to destroy the still-new and well-functioning toy, to mistreat the animals, to decorate the hallway or the dining room with their graffiti, Dad and Mum are seen not only as troublemakers and troublemakers, but also as violent persecutors, who prevent them from doing what they consider to be their sacrosanct right. That is why they feel right as they shout, cry and protest loudly.

For adolescents, the assertion and out-and-out defence of their rights is closely linked to the search for greater freedom and autonomy in their actions and choices, especially in the field of friendships, games, entertainment, but above all with regard to their mental and sexual life. Therefore, in front of parents, teachers and adults in general, it is as if they continually affirm and list these 'rights' of theirs, as if they were enshrined in gold letters in the articles of the constitutional charter.

"I have the right to go out in the piazzetta every night with my friends, to have the latest mobile phone like them, to go to the disco or the pizzeria every Friday and Saturday night, and to come back the next morning. And then onwards: "I also have the right to go out with the girl (or boy) who most

I like, which I enjoy the most, to do and possess all that my friends do and have" and so on. "Therefore, anyone who does not accept my demands and does not agree to be exhorted is to be considered unjust and bad, so it is legitimate for me to rebel vigorously and, if necessary, to attack him with my words and behaviour.

But even *adults do* not fail to assert and claim rights vis-à-vis partners that they consider legitimate and sacrosanct.

The rights of adult males concern, for example, playing five-a-side football every Saturday; cycling on Sunday mornings with friends; racing motorbikes or cars. At other times and for other, more pampered adults, the needs are of a completely different kind, such as: watching all the matches or other sports on TV, going to the sports ground on Sundays or going to the bar to chat and play with friends, going on pleasure trips with friends, and so on.

Therefore, when the girlfriend, partner or wife opposes this, she easily assumes the guise of a die-hard spoilsport enemy.

In the same way, adult women also feel that they have just as many needs to satisfy, such as: going shopping in all seasons, without paying too much attention to their wallet and regardless of the length of their skirts and the depth of their necklines, frequently arranging their hair at the hairdresser's, chatting for hours with girlfriends, watching heart-warming soap operas on TV, chatting at all times of the day in all the groups they are members of, posting the latest photos or their recipes on

Facebook, and so on. Therefore, the husband, boyfriend or partner, when they dare to oppose these and other desires and needs that women feel they have to fulfil, will easily be called 'retrograde, violent and overbearing ma- schilists'.

Then there are some new and exciting 'rights', closely linked to sex, emotions and feelings of the moment, which are considered a little, but only a little, too extreme, but to which modern societies offer a considerable amount of understanding and acceptance. These are the right to run after every skirt or trouser that is around, which can bring pleasure and excitement, or the right to let love emotions run wild when they make the heart beat faster.

On these and many other occasions, it seems pointless to point out that, alongside the many 'rights' that each of us proclaims, there should also be duties: towards the person next to us, towards our children, towards the family network and towards society, in relation to work, but also in relation to morals or simple good taste.

Unfortunately, the number and quantity of these 'rights' have multiplied disproportionately over time in all ages and both sexes, due to the constant advertising in all mass media at all hours of the day and night. Therefore, when someone hints at limiting or directing them correctly, a state of frustration immediately arises or intensifies, which some people cannot bear and therefore react with aggressive and violent manifestations.

Separation and divorce

The possibility of dissolving the marriage bond at any time has profoundly changed the perception and value of the family and, as a consequence, has changed responsibility towards children for the worse. The 'till death do you part' typical of marriage in the past, has been pushed to the margins of temporary cohabitation dictated by the more prosaic 'let's see if it works' and finally replaced by a flexible, part-time model of 'being together'. It is thought that one can 'enter and leave' a romantic relationship with impunity with a *click of a mouse*, as if it were a virtual relationship (Pirrone, 2014). Therefore, by not facing life together with the necessary conviction and commitment, the family is already negatively marked from its inception (Volpi, 2007, p. 62).

By the same author Volpi (2007, p. 15):

"One of the immediate effects of the divorce law manifested itself in an increase in the number and percentage incidence of civil marriages; not resounding, but certainly consistent and significant, which, above all, would not stop. The rise of civil marriages starts here, in the sense it is inextricably linked to the introduction of divorce legislation in our country".

If we interpret this increase in civil marriages correctly, there is no doubt that it has the meaning of 'opening the door' to an eventual and probable divorce. Thus, since this law came into operation, the sense that the union is for life has been lost in couples.

But along with the increasingly frequent marriage breakdowns, there has also been an increase in conflict spouses, not only during the longer or shorter time of the couple's union, but also in the phases following the separation. According to Ajuriaguerra (1995, p. 71), in all conditions of social deconstruction, aggression in individuals increases considerably, precisely because of the lack of mutual support. Statistically, the periods that generate the greatest stress and tensions within the couple are the days or months in which the separation or divorce takes place. This is especially the case when the couple relies on the court system with its corollary of testimonies and evidence, which are not always spontaneous and sincere; with its documents, which are not always faithful and truthful; with requests and behaviour, which almost always contain ulterior motives in favour of one of parties. These stresses and tensions easily spill over to individuals, generating considerable manifestations of mutual aggression and sometimes acts of very serious violence.

Separation and divorce do not only represent a separation from the other. Separation and divorce are actually a major break-up that involves and upsets a very wide range of people. In addition to the directly affected couple, it drags any children and family members of either spouse, but also the couple's close friends and the community as a whole into a serious malaise. The moment of separation is experienced, in many cases, as an unbearable tear in one's life and heart. Like lighting a match in a santabarbara, the explosions of emotions that can ensue are dramatic. Like a fire spreading across a barren prairie, as the wind blows

heat of the south: the anxiety, the anger, the fears that spread and upset the minds of those concerned are ungovernable.

Separating and divorcing profoundly affect and disrupt the physical and psychological environment, emotions and affections, habits and customary lifestyles, the inner well-being, but also the economic well-being of those who, even if only marginally, are somehow involved in these sad events. Regrets, guilt feelings, accusations, recriminations, but also a series of psychologically unbearable prevarications arise because of their intensity and their continuation over time.

Although the emotions that shake the souls of individuals are often considered consequential to the pre-existing conflicts during marriage or cohabitation, it is precisely the moments of separation and divorce that trigger the most violent and destructive impulses.

Per Hacker (1971, p. 145):

"The sudden release of aggression following the break-up of the bond, the loss of reference persons or the expulsion from the group, leads to its introjection in the form of depressive states ('good for me, I don't deserve any better') or guilt complexes when losing a loved one ('did I really do all I could?') as well as a feeling of uselessness and impotent rage, which in turn lead to indistinct and uncontrolled aggression.

Per Ackerman (1968, p. 193):

"It should also be remembered that, for parents, there can be no total divorce. Although permanently divided as a sexual couple, they remain permanently bound to the common responsibility for the care of their children, and in some cases this bond becomes a source of suffering for many years".

Within the family, it is easy for one or both members of the couple, without having the maturity and awareness of the relational dynamics at play and without understanding the seriousness of what they are doing, to set their children against each other, allowing pathological alliances to be created: boys against girls, mother and son against father and daughter (Ackerman, 1970, p. 82). (Ackerman, 1970, p. 82). In this way, they accentuate the suffering and discomfort of the children, who, in turn, suffer greater irritability, aggression and instability, both in childhood and adulthood, and will continue to feed a vicious, increasingly destructive and uncontrollable circle within the family and society.

Separations and divorces will also tend to bring up generations whose innate sense of the stability of marriage has been profoundly shaken by the early experience of divorce and living in broken families, and this will certainly influence future relationships, making them increasingly fragile and evanescent (Harding, 1951, p. 233).

For Maccoby et al. (1993, pp. 24-38), three basic types of behaviour are structured after divorce between spouses:

1. *Cooperative*. In these cases, parents talk to each other, discuss family problems, do not disqualify themselves.

each other and try to coordinate their activities for the benefit of their children. For example: 'I'll take Giulio to school; you, please, pick him up when he leaves'. Or: 'While you take our little girl to the doctor, I take care of talking to Francesco's teachers'. And so on. Unfortunately, this cooperative attitude or behaviour, in the research carried out by the above-mentioned authors, after eighteen months of separation, concerned only about a quarter of the subjects in the sample studied.

2. *Disengaged*. In these cases, the parents do not communicate with each other and do not cooperate with each other. As far as the children are concerned, it is as if they live in two separate worlds. For example, on Saturdays and Sundays they stay with the father, while during the week they are totally managed by the mother. When one of them turns bitterly to the ex-husband or wife, he or she this kind of commandment: "As we agreed with the judge, remember to collect Mario from the doorstep at six o'clock on Saturday and bring him back at six o'clock on Sunday, not before and not after, otherwise I'll call my lawyer and get you into serious trouble. This behaviour, only apparently cooperative, is usually implemented when one has quite old children and involves about one third of the sample examined.
3. *Hostile*. In one third of cases, separated parents maintain contact with each other, but this is handled in a systematically hostile manner. Since the need to take revenge and hurt the other persists in each of them, the persistence of the need to hurt the other is evident in

their relationships.

of aggression and conflict, as well as attempts to sabotage the well-being and peace of mind of the other are evident. In separating and divorcing couples who engage in hostile behaviour, for example, in order to prevent him or her from going out on a Saturday night with the new romantic partner, the ex-spouse will try to hinder these romantic encounters by placing obstacles in the way: 'I won't be able to take the children on Saturday because I have to go to the doctor's.' Or: 'You can be with your children whenever you want, but that nasty woman you live with is not allowed to be with you. Or: 'You can be with your children whenever you want, but that nasty woman you live with must never be near them'. Which, of course, is impossible to implement. The only purpose of this restriction is to contribute to creating havoc in the new couple that is being formed or has already been formed.

With the passage of time, disengaged behaviour becomes the most common and the type of custody implemented in court is of little value. The most conflictual parents are those who, after separation, have to provide for young children, those who have many children, but also those who have entered into new relationships.

Aggressiveness during and after separation

The reasons for conflict during and after separation are many.

1. Envy and jealousy

The act of separating and physically moving away from one's man or woman to live in another house, having

new relationships, breaks many pre-existing balances that, for better or worse, kept them under control.

the most intense emotions. To the suffering experienced during marriage or cohabitation is added that which arises during and after separation. The new-found freedom, in the new separated condition, stimulates both to seek new love affairs, which end with relationships that are not always more stable than the previous ones and which add more bitterness to the divorced person's mouth.

New and sometimes more intense reasons for conflict are often created, linked to the outbreak of jealousy and envy. Knowing that others have the words, kisses, caresses and body of the person one has so longed for, dreamed of and loved, with whom one has lived together for so many years and with whom one has built a family, arouses intense feelings of bitterness, jealousy and rivalry that are very difficult to control and contain: "Why not even the time to separate and he has someone else? What does this one have that I don't have? Is she more beautiful or more interesting than me? Can she listen to him and understand him more than I did?" Or from the man's side: "She immediately got involved with our best friend. Surely there was something there before. I always said she was a woman, who is not ashamed to bring her lover our house, introducing him and having him live with our children as if nothing had happened'. This can only give rise to painful feelings of helplessness, anger and rage, which are also accentuated by the loss of self-esteem.

It is not difficult for a series of images to pass in front of mind of the separated, as in a painful kaleidoscope, which can unsettle even the most settled and even-tempered mind. Images of the ex-partner who, free at last, is having a good time with someone else, perhaps using the home of his or her

partner.

bought together at the cost of immense sacrifices, to organise festive, intimate get-togethers, without caring at all about the pain, discomfort or, worse, the despair and jealousy that such behaviour provokes in those left behind.

On the other hand, the two family and friendship networks, rather than being helpful and supportive to the couple, frequently fuel and rekindle the conflict: "How can you accept that your ex-boyfriend has a good time with that girl, while you are forced to take care of his children day and night? Or: "How can you remain indifferent towards that nasty woman who shamelessly lets her new friend into the house, which you bought with your money and the sweat of your brow?

2. Economic motivations

Among the many reasons why considerable conflicts remain even after the marriage, there are certainly economic motives. Each of the former spouses tries in every way to demand and take as much for themselves as possible, but also to take as much as they can from the other, in order to take revenge and hurt them as much as possible. The economic war, fomented by the lawyers and relatives of one and the other, often goes on for decades. This state of perpetual conflict exasperates tempers and makes the climate between the two fiery, also because the separation often leads to a worsening of economic conditions for both. The salaries of both, when they exist, are systematically cut because of new expenses, such as those for lawyers and experts; but also because they are forced to cope with two dwellings, resulting in a doubling of the utilities connected to them:

water, electricity, gas, telephone, household taxes, rubbish collection and so on.

3. *Child care and management*

Another reason that triggers new and frequent conflicts concerns the care, upbringing and management of children. Care, upbringing and management which, on these occasions, become considerably more complex and difficult. The human development of children requires the constant presence of serene, adult and mature people who can be example, a guide and a stable point of reference. It is seriously illusory to imagine that one educator can safely replace another, or that one affection can safely be replaced by another, or that one home can be abandoned for another, without the children suffering harm. Damage that in some cases may be slight, but in many situations can be so serious that the fragile personalities of the youngest children can be de-structured or regress in a considerable and stable manner.

Every son would like to love and respect both parents, because his peace of mind, his joy, his trust in life and the world, his inner serenity, are placed almost exclusively in them. For this reason, suffering is great when he is forced to choose one over the other. Similarly, children suffer and experience intense feelings of guilt, which are difficult to manage, when they are forced to love and associate only with grandparents and maternal relatives or only with paternal relatives. The child enters into a vicious circle as behaviour that pleases one parent elicits rejection from the other (Lidz, 1977, pp. 65-66).

Internal conflict is also difficult to manage, when children realise that their siding with the parent with whom they are entrusted, with whom they stay longer and who takes better care of them, often stems not from an objective choice, but from the greater possibility bad-mouthing and accusing the other, but also from the fear of risking losing the support and bond of the only person who cares for them. This conflict causes and aggravates the already difficult and delicate inner life of the children of separated people and can lead to psychological disorders of varying severity, which alter their relationships with themselves, their peers, school, teachers and, above all, with one or both parents.

Often, children, who have been tried by so many disagreements and the disruption of their intimate and relational life, feel a sense of suspicion towards both mother and father because, through their incongruous behaviour, they have failed to maintain the climate of peace and serenity that they expected and to which they were entitled. Parents lose authority in their eyes not only because of the way they behaved when they were together, but also because of how they behave on a daily basis when they are separated. For example, when, as if they were teenage boys, they start dating new men and women, taking no account of the needs and wishes of their little ones, who would instead like Dad and Mum, after the stormy period, decide to stop fighting and make peace by getting back together again. And in the event that this is not possible, should at least avoid seeing other people, looking for new love or simply new romance, and concentrate on healing the wounds inflicted on their souls. It is indeed very difficult for a

child imagine and accept that their parents love, get engaged, have 'affairs' or sexual relationships with people other than their mother and father.

When, with new marriages or cohabitations, new, unfamiliar and often instinctively rejected figures enter the children's lives: new grandparents, new aunts and uncles, new half-sisters and half-brothers, to whom there is no pre-existing bond, but above all no desire for friendship, their problems do not always improve! Often these new, unwanted and unwanted relationships provoke further severe judgements in the children towards those who continue to disrupt the world in which they had previously lived.

Children are also forced to suffer the effects of increased irritability and jealousy on the part of one of the parents. Then: 'When marital unity has broken down and one of the spouses feels excluded, the fears of punishment and retaliation that affect the child are not only projections of the child's desire to get rid of one parent, but are based on the actual presence of a jealous and hostile parent towards the child' (Lidz, 1977, pp. 72-73).

Finally, it is not easy for children to accept that their parents, when separated, continue to wage open or underground warfare and directly involve them as spies on what the other does or does not do, what the other says or does not say, which person the other hangs out with. Their judgement becomes even harsher when they realise that they are being used as their own weapons, to accuse or denigrate the other parent, to take more money from him or her, or to hit and hurt him or her in a more painful way.

Lastly, it is difficult for separated or divorced people, who are so psychologically burdened, to maintain a correct parental line. Often, in order to win the love of a few children, both ex-spouses tend to adopt a clearly permissive or swinging attitude. How, on the other hand, act as a parental couple? How do you decide in full harmony and understanding what to do and how best to bring up your children when you necessarily have to accept the proposals or instructions coming from the person you hate the most, the person who has betrayed all their expectations, the person you despise the most? From what we have said, it is easy to understand how difficult it is for separated or divorced parents to bring up their children, but also simply to manage them on a day-to-day basis.

Consequences for children

To protect a child's well-being, it is necessary to protect his or her emotional environment. This consists, fundamentally, of the relationships between and with the people closest to them and dearest to their hearts: their parents and family members. A harmonious, serene and affectionate relationship is for every child the main source of physical and emotional security. This security is indispensable for its physical development but above all for the healthy development of the ego of every child that comes into the world. The serenity that arises from feeling an atmosphere of understanding, cooperation and mutual support around them is indispensable for the formation of a solid personal identity, capable of dealing effectively with the many critical events in the life of every human being. For this reason, the relationships between parents (*marital relationships*) and those

between parents and child (parental *relationships*), although fundamentally different, are close.

linked to each other, so much so that it is not possible to separate them, as they are part of the same family system.

We know that between a father and mother there is a mutual interest in raising their children together, so that when there is a good understanding between father and mother, they will be able to work together, supporting each other, so that they cooperate closely in the long, complex task of structuring the personality of their children. In a *functional co-parenting system*, when problems or disagreements arise, the parents are perfectly able to work together to solve them. To achieve this, a functional couple manages to be open and available to each other's needs and aspirations, creating an emotional climate in which the child is comfortable. It is for this reason that conjugally satisfied couples are able to show their children more warmth, dialogue, cooperation and sensitivity to their needs. With such valuable contributions, the children will have a better chance of growing up affectively and emotionally healthy, and will find it much easier to introduce norms, rules, experiences, interpersonal skills, opportunities for exchanges, emotional expressions, and appropriate strategies for resolving future conflicts with peers and adults.

For this reason, if during the marriage there are intense and heated conflicts, when these cease with separation, this may benefit the children, who are no longer forced to witness daily verbal or physical aggression and violence between the parents. However, if after the marriage these irritating and aggressive behaviours persist or become more pronounced, they harm the children, having to

among other things, living without the support of one of the parents aggravates their psychological status, which is already very strained.

As a consequence of this there may be a series of psycho-affective disorders, more or less serious, but always limiting the normal development of the child. These disorders are more serious when there is only an only child present, as opposed to when there are several brothers and sisters who can, by their presence, their affective relationship, mitigate or limit the possible damage.

Separated parents in whom the conflict situation persists often show signs of emotional deficiencies, lack of psychological balance, cognitive deficits, feelings of loneliness, depression, relationship difficulties, easy deviant behaviour, asocial or antisocial behaviour, laziness, lack of commitment and self-blame phenomena in connection with the parents' separation.

According to Lidz (1977, p. 69): 'More often than is apparent from a superficial study, children brought up in families where disintegrating tendencies exist tend to manifest a split in the ego structure. The definitive fracture between the parents on the level of reality gives rise, following introjection, to a similar fracture on the psychic level'.

The non-acceptance of gender differences

One of the most frequent reasons for conflict between men and women is currently the non-acceptance of gender differences. These differences are present in many fields: in communication, in different ways of experiencing and

managing sexuality, in clothing, in different historical and temporal perspectives, in the approach to work activities, in the style of education, and in the way of life.

in the emotional and affective field, in personal care, in tastes as well as in the choices that are made on a daily basis.

Whereas in traditional education, the different behavioural traits that characterise the two genders are accepted and valued by both sexes and social circles because of the importance of these differences in family relations, in the social and educational field, for several decades now in our society, these specific traits have been seen by many as defects to be corrected or, even better, eliminated. The aim often seems to be to replace them with behavioural traits that are uniform as far as possible, underestimating how this is not only biologically impossible, but above all considerably harmful.

Sex characteristics are the result of natural selection over thousands of years to improve the peculiarities of the human race so as to make it ever more efficient, capable and adaptable to the many different environments in which it has come to find itself over time. In fact, if the infant's ego is able to form and develop in the healthiest and most balanced way, this must surely be attributed to the typically feminine qualities present in women who have been brought up in the right way. These women, possessing in abundance what we call 'maternal' characteristics, made up of great tenderness and softness, as well as a warm presence and intense empathic abilities, are able to welcome, understand and respond appropriately to the needs of a newborn and to the development of a child in the first years of life. Even later on, the mothers' communicative richness,

When they approach their child, it is fundamental and valuable for the growing little human being, who, in his or her first years of life, needs to develop, quickly and well, the fundamental capacities specific to mankind: elaborate communication and rich, articulate verbal language.

But also with regard to paternal contributions, how can we fail to note certain masculine characteristics such as strength, determination, straightforwardness, loyalty and honour? Knowing full well that these qualities are fundamental, not only for establishing good social relationships and good civilised living, but are also indispensable for being able to face difficulties and problems in life with courage and determination.

It is also detrimental to change gender characteristics in relationships, because if it is not accepted that different and complementary perspectives and ways of feeling between men and women and between the roles of fathers and mothers can and must coexist, the frequency and severity of misunderstandings and quarrels, as can be seen from the experience of recent decades, will not only not diminish at all, but will actually become much more pronounced. For all these reasons, gender differences should be responsibly stimulated and enhanced, and certainly not restricted and repressed.

Choosing a partner

The choice of a partner should be the result of very careful and scrupulous examination and should be based more on good character compatibility and the presence of those qualities that are necessary to establish a stable and serene life of couple and family, rather than on pleasure,

on the interest or passion of the moment. If, on the other hand, as is often the case today, this choice is clouded by blind, instinctive passion, if this assessment is merely the result of the projection of our conscious and unconscious desires, present at the stage of falling in love, or even worse, if this choice is the result of a simple, pleasant, occasional erotic game, we certainly cannot expect a result that is not only valid, but not even acceptable, in order to embark on a stable, responsible, serene and respectful path as a couple, with respect to the needs and requirements of the partner and children.

Popular experience, acquired over millennia, as well as the most up-to-date scientific investigations, have long pointed out what qualities spouses must have in order for a good partnership and the formation of a functional and healthy family to be possible. Put simply, one does not find a good husband or wife by chance or luck; one does not find a responsible and capable father and mother for one's children by chance or luck. To achieve this, precise and responsible choices are required. Of these, the most important are:

1. *The affinities.*

In the meantime, in order to achieve a peaceful life as a couple, it is necessary to be able to share many common elements with the person you love, such as age, culture, lifestyle, ideas, habits, religious and moral values.

For Ackerman (1968, p. 200) both spouses should share desires, values and there should be reasonable compatibility in emotional, social, economic and parental experiences. Being close to the age of the

partner; having ethical and moral values, religion, traditions, desires, aspirations, cultural, political and artistic interests in common, but also having a social status similar to that of the partner, greatly facilitates a good and stable understanding (Guèguen, 2009, p. 99). On the contrary, one risks exposing oneself to frequent and serious conflicts, with consequent crises and rupture of the conjugal bond, when entering into a relationship with a person whose experiences, ideas, values, lifestyle and personality traits are very different from ours, if not divergent:

Unfortunately, as a result of various factors, including the spread easy contact by electronic means, the globalisation of the labour market, greater economic prosperity, increased tourist and professional exchanges, excessive sexual and emotional freedom, and the little or no influence of families and the social environment in the choice partners, there a considerable increase in relationships with very different or even conflicting characteristics. And this often heralds disastrous consequences for the harmony and well-being of the couple and, consequently, the children.

2. Ability to establish healthy relationships family networks.

Many clashes between the sexes are somehow connected, though often unjustly, to inappropriate or destructive interference from the family networks of the two young people. This has encouraged many couples to exclude as much as possible the

² Among people in mixed marriages, the divorce and separation rate is around 80%. The divorce rate is double that of Italy.

families of origin, both at the time of choosing a partner and throughout the conduct of the relationship. As if to say: 'If our families can be a cause of conflict, better to do without them and live independently, without any interference'.

This solution, unfortunately, turned out to be a bitter disappointment. The couple is not normally, and should not , totally independent and autonomous of the environment in which it was born and developed. Just as it cannot be, and should not be, totally independent of the new family network into which it fits. For these reasons, the understanding between the members of a couple is closely linked to the understanding between and with their own family, but also to the good relations they manage to establish with their partner's family.

Ultimately having few conflicts one's parents and maintaining good, indeed very good, relations with the other's family network is crucial in order to avoid future couple conflicts. In addition, when conflicts do arise, the presence of helpful, close, active, attentive and cooperating family members will certainly be an excellent viaticum to overcome destructive crises. It is not a matter, then, of isolating oneself, but of learning, from an early age, the secrets and the best ways to relate well with one's own and one's partner's family members, so that the presence of these people is helpful and supportive and does not become a reason for damage to the couple.

3. The presence of appropriate psycho- logical characteristics.

It should come as no surprise that there are people who

are suited to enter into a stable, serene and productive relationship

and people who find it difficult to do so, due to personality traits that are unsuitable for good relationships, inability to cope with the difficulties and stresses of a normal family, lack of essential qualities for understanding, educating, talking to and caring for children. In particular, men and women who present psychological problems of such a magnitude that they disturb or, worse still, make peaceful and constructive dialogue impossible are not suited to a relationship, so as to be able to create and lead a functional family well. People who suffer from excessive anxiety, depression, restlessness, instability, easy irritability and aggression.

On the contrary, the most suitable people are those who:

- They possess good serenity and inner security.
- They have good listening and dialogue skills.
- They are helpful and enjoy caring for others.
- They are determined in facing the difficulties and adversities of life.
- They are endowed responsibility and reliability.
- They are endowed with a good personal maturity. This is indispensable both for dealing with the many problems inherent in a relationship as complex as the male-female relationship, and for taking on a correct educational task. Spock, (1969, p. 50) says: *"I would say that the surest measure of a man or woman's maturity is the harmony, the style, the happiness, the dignity that he or she succeeds in creating in the relationship."*

marriage and in the pleasure and inspiration they can give their spouse. The immature individual may achieve success in career, but never in marriage. Personal maturity is especially important today, as we live in a society that is not only very complex and arctic, but also remarkably confused, disjointed and incoherent.

- They possess good adaptive capacities. In normal family life, worries and problems are so frequent and numerous that good, indeed very good, adaptability is required of the men and women who enter it. For these reasons, it is notoriously difficult, if not impossible, for childish, weak or insecure people to cope adequately with the difficulties and problems in family and married life.

4. *Proper training in family and couple life*

It is also difficult to imagine that a man and a woman could go through life together without adequate preparation and fruitful training. In the past, this was done by parents, by other family members, but also by adults rich in wisdom and experience, who used their words and example to do this. Unfortunately, this preparation and apprenticeship are often lacking today. They are absent in parents, who are often busy working and competing with each other, but they are absent in other adults and the social environment around us, who often offer numerous examples of uneducational behaviour, in the

selfishness individualism and lack of responsibility prevail.

Present-day education, which is organised and committed almost exclusively on a professional level, has proved to be totally unsuitable for the growth and development of men and women capable of dealing with the vast and fundamental field of emotional and relational relationships, as well as the normal educational and care tasks, which are indispensable when it comes to creating a healthy and functional family.

Violence as imitation and learning

The fact that aggression, like many negative behaviours, can be learnt from the living environment, has always been known: 'He who practices with the lame a year lames'. This ancient proverb clearly indicates the considerable negative influence of the people we associate with and live with on our relational and social behaviour. Children and adolescents in particular, but also adults, instinctively tend to imitate the attitudes and behaviour they see in their living environment. Therefore, just as they are driven to reproduce the positive behaviours of acceptance, respect, dialogue, giving and caring, so too can they imitate, in every relational relationship, the behaviour of rejection, aggression and violence, of which they are the spectators.

For minors, this imitation is more frequent and more pronounced when the negative behaviour comes from people who have a greater emotional and educational value for them: 'I see my parents arguing all the time, so it is normal for spouses to argue with each other. "My father has

violently and aggressively with me or my mother; it is normal and logical that I also do the same, with my children and my wife'. "My mother used to shout all the time and I too have the habit of shouting over nothing'. Some of these children, as adults, will tend to repeat the same behaviour they experienced in childhood, while others, by chance, by adopting positive behaviour acquired from other adults they met in other environments, will be able to criticise and reject behaviour that they consider violent, unfair and distressing.

Moreover, as Hacker (1971, p. 315) puts it: 'Aggressive behaviour, like many other behavioural forms, has a tendency to extend and generalise; once learnt and tested, it is extended to other situations and applied there'. Even worse if aggressive attitudes are rewarded. In these cases even clearly abnormal behaviour takes on positive values (Ajuriaguerra, 1995, p. 71).

However, in this regard, it should be noted that in the educational field when aggression arises from suffering, frustrations and traumas suffered, the repressive attitude does not achieve the desired and hoped-for results, because one cannot in- sign not to be aggressive by using aggression! (Hacker, 1971, p. 171)

Aggression learned from group logic.

This type of behaviour is frequent in young people and adolescents who, being part of a 'pack', are conditioned by the rules in the group. They therefore have considerable difficulty in controlling their behaviour and attitudes.

aggressive and violent behaviour suggested by the other members, since this behaviour becomes a necessary condition for acceptance by the others. For this reason, the young person who adheres to these indications feels deprived of responsibility for personal decisions and feels obliged to accept the decisions made by the pack leader or the majority of peers. On the other hand, opposing the behaviour would mean opposing the whole group, no longer being part of it and, consequently, feeling isolated and marginalised.

In these cases, the individual does not act aggressively out of frustration or to relieve excessive anxiety, but to adhere to a group logic, which sees violence as necessary and consistent with his or her own needs for integration and sociality. As Erikson and Erik, (2008, p.29), put it: 'An individual feels isolated from the sources of collective strength when he, perhaps only in his inner self, takes on any role that his group considers particularly negative'.

Aggression and violence learned from the media and mass media.

The emulation of scenes of violence in the mass media, films, video games and shows such as Wrestling are not to be underestimated. According to Hacker (1971, p. 317): 'Everywhere the mass media influence the general consciousness and with it, indirectly but decisively, the unconscious, the opinions, attitudes and actions of the public'.

And again the same author (Hacker, 1971, p. 315):

"The average American teenager is so oversaturated by the many aggressive stimuli transmitted by the media that no specific model of aggression seems new to him or worthy of imitation; however, this dulling of the individual is achieved at the price of an overall increase in the level of aggression.

As far as wrestling is concerned, it certainly cannot be indifferent, especially for minors, to watch super-fleshed-out giants wrestling and attacking each other in a violent and savage manner, trying in every way to hurt the opponent, even to the point of crushing him to the ground with their huge bodies. The fact that we know that what we are actually witnessing is a fake fight and that, hopefully, these athletes do not really hurt each other, is not always perceived correctly, especially by the youngest spectators. In these, the emotional trace that permeates and predominates in their souls can unfortunately lead to the desire and pleasure of being able to imitate them in some way.

As far as films and TV series are concerned, whereas until a few decades ago the hero had a function of defending the nation, the weakest and the defenceless, and therefore, at least in the intentions of the authors, played a positive role, for many decades now the same hero has been participating in a confused and chaotic way in the pleasure of destroying and attacking everything within reach, using any instrument of destruction: bazookas, bombs, fire, cars and trucks, often without being able to trace a minimum of constructive and educational purpose in his actions. "The mimetic tendency is exalted when the aggressive acts shown are portrayed as heroic, pro-maging and successful, or when the spectators are shown the same.

are expressly invited to imitation and are self-initiated into it' (Hacker, 1971, p. 315).

That is why today's heroes, with whom one should identify and imitate, are certainly fearless, fast, strong and self-confident, but they are also confused and violent, without mercy, but also without any willingness to listen and understand the other.

Even more serious is the stimulus to emulation that the individual, especially at a developmental age, may receive from the contents of the most commonly used and popular video games. Many of these games are essentially based on a continuous, repetitive, perennial struggle, using various weapons and strategies, against aliens and imaginary enemies, monsters to destroy before being destroyed, to kill before being killed, but also struggles against unfortunate, harmless bystanders. On the other hand, very often in these games, killing as many of the imaginary enemies as possible makes one 'win' a game or takes one to the next level and thus 'rewards'. These characters suggest, and in time convince little user, that attacking and destroying are not only 'normal' attitudes and behaviours but also useful, pleasant and fun.

It will be said that violence in films, TV or video games is 'fake, it's not real, it's just spectacle' however *'The imitative effect is the same whether the scenes of violence are produced in studios or filmed from real life (even if this difference were recognisable). Bandura and later Berkowitz demonstrated by extensive experiments on groups of children of different ages that the growth effect*

of aggression exercised by examples of aggression is essentially the same, regardless of whether the aggression depicted and subsequently imitated originally took place in real life, in a film or in a cartoon' (Hacker, 1971, p. 315).

As there no pity, tenderness, understanding, justice, but above all no nuance in these images and games, the use of these tools can lead to reactive and aggressive attitudes towards others, as it reduces inhibitions and does not educate on the need to seek and find alternative solutions to problems and conflicts between human beings, using dialogue, mediation and agreement between the parties.

The other consequence of these spectacles, which is perhaps even worse than the previous one, is that the idea that in the world in which we live, there is an infinite number of enemies that can surreptitiously surround us, attack us and do us harm, and that we must therefore live constantly on the defensive, always ready to take the most effective weapons to protect or attack us, creeps into the children's minds and souls.

This media pollution is all the more serious the greater the number of messages, the younger the age, the more psychologically fragile, suggestible and insecure the subject, but also the greater the interactivity.

However, it is difficult for society and legislators to accept and, above all, to remedy the indisputable fact that the violent words and images heard and seen, but also virtually performed thousands of times by minors, children and adults are not only a source of violence, but also a source of conflict.

adolescents and adults, can leave indelible traces in the soul of those who use them. It is then preferred, for economic and ideological reasons, to make people believe that this is not true and is not possible, in order to cover up a reality that is difficult to accept; since accepting this would mean substantially altering the supposed neutrality of these instruments and thus intervening not only in their use, but also and above all in their production.

Among other things, a large part of the education and training of minors today has become media-driven, due to parents who are increasingly impatient, distant, absent and distracted. And if the media, but also the Internet, are full of violent content, the results can only be detrimental in terms of respect for the integrity, dignity and sacredness of the soul, body and life others. This is evident in many social relationships. School and house assemblies, parliamentary discussions, Facebook, football matches and television debates, wherever there is the slightest possibility of confrontation with different ideas, are often used to vent one's anger and frustrations on others through verbal violence. According to Dacquino (1994, p. 304): 'We live in a climate of verbal violence and sadism, fuelled by the habit of heatedly arguing about even the most trivial things. We are always on the warpath or we argue with a harsh, shrill, loud voice, even though we know that shouting is the reaction of those who are wrong or insecure'.

Aggression can be learned in the family from erroneous parenting styles.

There are educational styles in which the values of acceptance, brotherhood, love, acceptance and gift are transmitted, but unfortunately there also educational styles in which disvalues are transmitted: such as violence, arrogance, arrogance and exploitation of others for one's own ends. In these cases, the erroneous principle is constantly emphasised that we must respond 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' to what we have suffered, and that 'we must not be sheep but wolves' ready to bite those who have hurt us or could hurt us or could take something of ours from us. These educational styles urge the acceptance and use of force and violence on many, too many occasions without it being strictly necessary and useful.

Disruption of traditional roles

According to the definition of the sociologist Smelser (1995, p.18): "A role consists of the expectations that are created regarding the behaviour of a person when he or she is in a certain position within a group".

The role may arise from necessity, needs or choices made by individuals; by certain components of society requiring certain services; by organised groups and may also be entrusted to and required by people with whom we have common interests and goals. However, a role can also become concrete automatically: for example, when a woman or a man has a child, they become *ipso facto*, if only nominally, mother and father, and their siblings become uncles and aunts and uncles respectively, while this woman's and this man's parents become grandparents. The role can also be chosen by the same

people who will later take it on. And this in order to find, in a given commitment, a new realisation or greater pleasure and gratification: "I want to be your wife", "I want to be your husband", "I want to be a mother", "I want to be a father for this adopted child", "I want to be a teacher, scientist" and so on.

To be well performed, each role must be accepted and supported by others and requires specific qualities, preparation and commitment. When we have clarity of the function of our role, in society, in the family and in the relationship with the people we love; when this role is adherent to our expectations and to the most intimate nature of our experience; when it is accepted, respected, understood and supported by others, then we are able to perform it fully and well with enthusiasm and joy, deriving intense satisfaction and full gratification from it. If a role is well lived and performed, it is easy for personal self-esteem, a sense of security, serenity and inner balance to improve. From a well-lived and well-performed role, others will certainly benefit.

When, on the other hand, we take on roles that are ill-defined, confused, variable, when these roles are frequently subjected to criticism, disapproval and contestation by those around us, or when they do not fit our deepest and most intimate nature, it is very easy for dissatisfaction, anxiety, restlessness and insecurity to arise in us, which may be followed by anxiety, irritability and, consequently, even aggressive thoughts and behaviour.

The multiplicity of roles

Each of us can have, and often does have, several roles: one can be a father, uncle, grandfather, brother, husband, business manager, writer, trade unionist, volunteer, etc. at the same time. For adults, having more than one role is the norm and not the exception. And it is perhaps for this reason that trying to take on many different roles and being able to change them at will seems not only natural, but also very easy and desirable: "Why just be a mother or father and not also a teacher, politician, writer, etc.?"

Certainly, this willingness to change roles or to take on many new ones seems interesting, stimulating, modern and in line with the times: "How boring to do the same thing over and over again", "How nice to change and get involved again". However, it is not always easy and convenient to change one's role or to take on a new one, or worse, to aspire to an excessive plurality of roles, sometimes conflicting with each other. And this for various reasons:

1. Having an excessive number of roles often does nothing for the person exercising it, and for the community for it is exercised. It may indeed be the case that the contributions made, when all is said and done, are modest or insufficient, both in quality and quantity. The reason is simple: for every role that is added to the previous ones, the burdens, commitments, responsibilities and sacrifices required to fulfil them all increase, and this entails a considerable expenditure of time and physical and mental energy that is not always available to us. All this translates for the person into increased stress, anxiety and discomfort. Common

sense would then dictate that we assume the roles for
the

which we are well prepared and able to know, perform well and correctly and not all those that enthusiasm and fashions of the moment dictate or are offered to us.

2. Often, even an apparently simple role needs long and careful preparation. This is especially true today, since every task that modern, highly complex and articulated societies require requires lengthy studies, master's degrees and training, which can sometimes last for decades. For this reason, the expenditure of time and energy required to take on one role can hardly be replicated and activated for many others. In such cases, the risk is to take on some essential tasks for the family and society without the necessary preparation, risking doing everything wrong, with consequences also in terms of personal self-esteem.
3. When we decide to take on tasks that are too diverse and conflicting and fail to perform them well, we are caught up in anxiety and doubts: "Am I doing it right or am I doing it wrong?" "Is what I am doing right or not?" If we try to get out of this inner restlessness, neglecting some roles in favour of others, it is clear that we will disappoint first of all ourselves, but also the people or institutions who expected much more than we were actually able to offer.
4. In dealing with the various roles, we miss the consideration that they are more than momentary tasks. Each role tends to affect and penetrate deeply into our being, marking and modifying, also

deeply, our inner reality as well as our life. The self-image is made up of many elements that mostly belong to the sphere of the unconscious. The subject's ego is made up of one's body, one's mind, but also of the experiences and emotions experienced during one's life. Therefore, the tasks and roles, which from time to time we are entrusted with or choose to perform, influence our being. We become aware of this reality when we notice that a change in role is also associated with a different inner attitude and a change in our behaviour. Therefore, if at times a certain type of personality needs to express itself in a certain task, at other times, on the contrary, it is the task undertaken that shapes and modifies the personality of the subject. If, for example, a 'precisina' person likes to apply himself in jobs, such as that of a watchmaker, in which these characteristics can be enhanced, the opposite can also happen, namely that the work performed modifies certain aspects of his personality. Another example, among many we could give, is that of a career soldier who, willingly or unwillingly, due to the long training and intense discipline he is forced to undergo in order to perform his task correctly, soon takes on the classic characteristics of a good soldier: grit, rigidity, aggressiveness, impetus, dynamism, endurance, obedience and love of discipline. However, these characteristics are not always appropriate for other roles in which the military style is not only not necessary, but is even

counterproductive. Generally speaking, we can say that the style one acquires in the business and service worlds can be inadequate and unsuitable when dealing with affective, educational and relational relationships. This is because, in managerial and professional activities, grit and dynamism; resourcefulness and determination; precision in behaviour and rationality; the ability to change and update are of great value. On the contrary, in the world of affection and relationships, serenity and relaxation are important; gentleness and tenderness; availability and acceptance; the ability listen and care; instinctuality and sacrifice but, above all, stability and continuity in behaviour are fundamental. Changes in sexual roles are certainly those that cause, more than others, considerable and often unforeseen consequences. When one tries to live, feel, love, work like the other sex, not only does one's role change, but one's gender identity also tends to change, with considerable consequences on one's most intimate and profound experience. Very often, however, in these cases, in both women and men, rather than a true reversal or change gender, a caricature effect is obtained. Not being able, in fact, to fully experience the other sexual gender, one is forced to imitate its excesses or the more superficial and striking elements of a personality that is not one's own. One obtains in definition a strange, modest imitation of the worst and most superficial sides of the other sex, which leads to a state of dissatisfaction and tension

considerable, which ends up irritating, embittering and stiffening the person involved.

Traditional roles

As far as men were concerned, in the hastily set aside traditional roles, personal gratification and satisfaction stemmed from various elements.

1. From the pride of providing for the material needs of their families.
2. From feeling responsible for the protection, cohesiveness and smooth functioning of the family entrusted to them.
3. From being guarantors of balance, stability and well-being of each member, not only of their family, but also of the community, in which this family was embedded.
4. From the possibility that men had instil each person of the family group those common guidelines, norms and rules, which are indispensable in the development of interpersonal relations, as well as being fundamental to the development of healthy, functional and adequate families for civilised living.

In carrying out their difficult, responsible and strenuous role, the men's determination, strength, consistency and security stemmed from being supported, helped and stimulated by their life partners, the community in which they lived, and the laws of the state.

As far as women were concerned, their personal gratification and satisfaction stemmed from recognising many fundamental tasks in their role.

1. In the meantime, they were conscious of building, with their love, tenderness and care, not the body of every little human being who entered life and the world, but also, and above all, the fundamental components of each one's ego. As Sle- poj (2005, p. 151) puts it: *'In fact, in children of both sexes, it is precisely the primary identification with the mother, as the one who cares and supports, who processes anxieties and reassures, that fosters the development of a solid core of the personality, which, depending on the author, is referred to as the "deep self" or "basic trust". Only this identification, in fact, allows the child to build within himself those maternal capacities for processing anxieties and taking care of himself that will give him the security to become authentically autonomous'*.
2. Mothers were also aware that they were indispensable players in the development of the most important human characteristics of their children.
 - It was they, the women, who initiated their children in verbal and non-verbal language, as well as in communication and listening skills.
 - It was mainly they, the women, who were responsible for developing the emotional and relational skills of the future of mankind.
 - It was above all they, the women, who were able to make their children taste the pleasure and joy of sharing, but also the importance of offering others, especially the most needy, the elderly and the disabled, the wonderful gifts that are born in the soul

when one generously offers one's availability, care, closeness and emotional warmth.

- Women were aware that they were the protagonists in the difficult task of enriching the souls of the new generations with innumerable fundamental such as communication and listening skills, sensitivity and tenderness, relationship and acceptance, love and forgiveness.
3. They were proud, the women, to be indispensable in contributing their words and loving gestures to the physical and psychological well-being of their life partners. They knew that with their behaviour they would be able to welcome, gratify, support and comfort their men, thus making them even stronger and more self-confident, even more willing to commit themselves to them, but also to children, family and social institutions.
 4. Finally, women were well aware that they were proactive in weaving and keeping alive, efficient and productive ties with their own and their man's family network. Networks and ties were indispensable to ensure good harmony and well-being, both for the couple and for the families that were beginning their difficult journey on the world stage.

Current roles

When, for both sexes, these well-defined, stable and socially appropriate roles and their specific characteristics were first called into question and then criticised, blamed, and finally almost completely cancelled, in order to replace them with other, unclear, if not clearly con-

The fact that the two genders are united, that they do not match each other's characteristics, that they are totally unsatisfactory in creating prosperity for them and their children, since they are directed and aimed almost exclusively satisfying the needs of finance, production, acquisition and distribution of goods and services, something fundamental has not worked in the male-female relationship; something very important has entered an irreversible crisis; something has broken and, as a result, something deleterious has distorted a large part of the social, relational and family system.

Over the years, this crisis has become increasingly serious and destructive, triggering a perverse spiral of poor dialogue, misunderstanding, conflict and aggression, which has spread and widened in and out of couples and families, in and out of the political arena, in individuals as well as in communities.

There are several reasons for this crisis and this perverse spiral.

1. *The distribution of power and roles between men and women.*

The destructive criticism and blaming of traditional roles has forgotten that: *"The distribution of power between men and women, was not operated once and for all at the origin of mankind by a deus ex machina or a supernatural creator, but is the result of a long-term cultural option, we would say today of a social contract, of a negotiation on the basis of which each person occupies a determined place within the community"* (Slepoj, 2005, p. 134).

Moreover, history has always confirmed to us that this age-old distribution of roles did not originate as a result of a war between men and women, whereby, after the victory of the former, the other sex was overwhelmed, but originated from the need to address, in the best possible way, the complex and inescapable educational needs present in the development of every human being. These educational needs, which are often underestimated today, require considerable training commitments that must necessarily be carried out at the appropriate times and in the appropriate ways, by other human beings who, with minors, have had the opportunity to establish stable, deep, warm and tender emotional and relational bonds.

All this gave rise to, and is still active in many countries around the world, the social pact in the distribution of roles, the validity of which has been amply demonstrated during military experiences in the past.

2. Competition between similar or equal roles

In couple relationships, which are certainly not lacking in complexity and difficulty, if each sex is committed, active and pro-active in a different and specific field, in the eyes and hearts of the other, this commitment takes on great value and is seen and experienced as an important, cherished and precious element, for which one should be enormously grateful. Consequently, it is precisely because of a positive view of the other person, who is considered important, indeed fundamental and indispensable, because of the special contribution he or she is able to make every day to his or her spouse, children and family, that interest and care will be mobilised towards him or her in order to improve his or her

well-being. Furthermore, the commitment in different and complementary fields will allow the emergence of

an alliance and mutual trust, which are essential to ward off or diminish possible conflicts.

If, on the other hand, both sexes are active at the same level and committed in the same fields, it is much easier to perceive the other as an unfair competitor at many moments in life together, or, in other cases, as a lazy, unreliable partner who does not make sufficient effort and does not provide for the needs of the partner and the family as much as he should and could. If, for example, both are active and committed in the professional field, it is easy for one of them to look at the other with suspicion and envy, when the earnings, visibility and fame of one will be higher than those of the other.

This is even more evident and serious when the sphere in which one of the two partners engages is not traditionally the preserve of one's sexual gender. If, for example, the woman earns more than the man or is more successful than him in the economic and professional spheres, so that she gets a higher valuation and respect from the social environment, there is a real risk that the partner will perceive this as a threat to his reputation and image as a man, and this may give rise to jealousy, irritability and aggression towards his partner.

Ackerman (1968, p. 150) describes the consequences in the *competitive couple* very well. In these cases: *"Each of the two parents competes with the other and fears being overtaken. Neither is secure, even if they have a claim to greater competence. Paradoxically, each passes the word to the other when it comes to making responsible decisions."*

sible. The struggle for competition reduces emotional sympathy, distorts communication, weakens the reciprocity of support and co-responsibility, and diminishes the satisfaction of personal needs.

The same can happen if it is the man who is more successful in a field traditionally associated with the female gender, such as affective-relational and caring. If, for example, the husband or partner succeeds in having a greater and better dialogue and confidence in the relationship with the children, a greater and better understanding and communion, a more intimate and deeper listening, it is easy for the woman, feeling less considered, sought after and loved by the children, to feel relegated to a subordinate role. This may push her to fight to wrest from the man his supremacy, even using the weapon of delegitimisation.

Ultimately, when the roles are not clear and well-defined, there is a risk that each of the two, rather than making an effort to make the most of the other's efforts, tends to consider the latter's contributions as a personal loss, so that, as a reaction, they will try in every way to belittle the other, rejoicing more in his failures than in his successes. This uncomfortable situation can easily give rise to competition, which is all the more insidious because it is more subterranean, irrational and instinctive, and can easily lead a conflictual relationship, which will manifest itself in obvious irritating, aggressive and angry behaviour at the strangest and most unusual times.

As a result of lack of satisfaction, it can also happen that men full of resentment and humiliation, when faced with

women who are better off in the workplace, who earn more than

They leave their small, unsatisfying job and devote themselves only to their hobbies, just as it may happen that women, full of resentment towards their partners, almost totally give up their affective, relational and caring role, when they feel that this role has been taken away from them by their men, who have succeeded in establishing better and deeper emotional ties with their children.

Often, at the end of this competitive war, which is seldom declared, but rather most often kept well concealed, both find having lost pleasure of commitment and this may drive them to shut themselves up in a cocoon of apathy and flight. Like saying to themselves and to the world: 'If my role, my skills and my commitment are not valued, I will voluntarily and angrily self-limit them, in order to take revenge for the ca- ception that has been placed on me'. Or, on the contrary, frustration may drive men and women to attitudes and behaviour of self- and hetero-aggression and destructiveness.

3. The entrustment of roles

Finally, there is another problem that is little talked about. If certain role is entrusted to only one person, that person, who feels fully responsible for the result, will endeavour to perform it well and correctly, giving the best of himself, if only to satisfy pride and self-esteem. Furthermore, in the event of failure, it is easy for the responsibility to be placed on the other person: 'that did not cooperate', 'that he/she did not try hard enough', 'that he/she made a mistake', 'that he/she behaved lazily or incompetently', and so on.

Once again, we have an important example in our families. Entrusting men and women with the same role has led to a disinvestment in family commitments and responsibilities, especially in educational and care responsibilities. Because if something does not work, and unfortunately there are many things that do not work in these areas, it is certainly the other person's fault. If, on the other hand, something goes well, it is definitely our fault.

Ultimately, giving both spouses the same tasks, functions and roles turned out - and it was not difficult to foresee - to be the best way to set men and women against each other and to make the relationship between the sexes permanently and perpetually conflictual.

4. The deleterious effects of supremacy

When women are incited to fight against men, accusing them of the worst evils, it underestimates the fact that men and women are, and could not be otherwise, intimately linked in needs, aspirations and goals. Therefore, as Slepj (2005, p. 140) says, it is essential to be aware that the masculine is a category of relationships, so if the masculine dies or goes into crisis, the feminine also dies and goes into crisis.

Moreover, striving to overpower, push away, blame, blame or worse, exclude one of the sexes from one's soul or life is like striving to overpower, push away, blame, blame and exclude oneself. In the final analysis: 'The striving for total supremacy has as its ultimate effect a sense of loneliness and emotional deficiency' (Ackerman, 1970, p. 152).

5. *Shared responsibility*

There is often an insistence on a crisis of masculinity, which is felt with sadness and disappointment, due to the fact that the image of the man who provides for the family has been diminished and debased. This crisis would explain the aggression and violence against women, who are guilty of taking away a privileged status from men. However, this reading overlooks the indisputable fact that all roles of responsibility and authority entail not only 'honours' but also many 'burdens', and that the latter often far outweigh the rewards of honours.

This reality explains very well what happened. When the law on the family took away the authority of the head of the family from the husband, entrusting it to both of them and then ultimately to the judiciary, many men not only did not tear their hair out and take to the streets to protest and fight tooth and nail against this law, but, as we would say today, they did not even flinch and immediately accepted and took advantage of this new situation to 'pull back the oars'. In other words, they welcomed this loss of the role of head of the family, but in return, they willingly accepted the responsibility, the effort, the commitment and all the sacrifices this role entailed. And since the *shared responsibility* quickly turned into a *shared irresponsibility*, each member of the couple, not being formally invested with this specific and precise role, thought it best to shrug off all obligations and commitments, passing on to the other or to others the shortcomings that were gradually being created within the family.

The most obvious shortcomings are to be found above all in the educational, training, affective and effective guidance of the youngest children, but also of adolescents and young people. These shortcomings, from then on, began to be attributed to the other: 'who not committed'; 'who does not work'; 'who does not care about the needs of the family'; 'who is too permissive or too rigid and authoritarian'. To the other: 'who certainly does not understand, does not adapt to modern times', because he is too immature, incapable and perhaps even disturbed.

The laws that have promoted and imposed a common and shared responsibility for decisions concerning the family's development have also failed to take into account and foresee that when every decision 'by law' must be taken by common agreement, the conflicts that arise from a different way of seeing and dealing with the family's problems and needs multiply and worsen considerably, as both spouses feel empowered and stimulated to endless, exhausting and ultimately unsuccessful and sterile discussions and negotiations on every subject and every decision to be taken, whether small or big.

Moreover, these laws have not foreseen that the endless and sterile discussions and negotiations often, in the end, lead to the worst of conclusions: to decide nothing so as not to give the other person the upper hand, or to leave all decisions to the other person and to detach oneself as much as possible, sometimes gradually and sometimes stupidly from all family responsibilities and to enjoy one's leisure time and beloved hobbies in peace!

The consequences for men

For men, women represented a remarkably rich and important reality.

1. He was the other part of himself. He was the symbol of tenderness and fragility; of delicacy and warm emotionality. All realities that man lacked and with which he wanted to unite. Says Harding (1951, p. 25): *'A man without a soul is but half a man, so when his soul is projected onto another being, it is as if half of him is in that being. Hence the enormous importance and attractiveness of the woman, the desire to enter into a relationship with her in order to enter into a relationship with the soul that is otherwise lost to him'*.
2. The woman was most important object love.
3. It was the being that would allow him to prolong his existence, beyond earthly life, by giving birth to and then educating his children.
4. He was person with whom to build a family, that is, the basic cell of every human society.
5. It was that special being who would take care of him, who would be there for him in every day and in all difficulties of life.
6. She was the only person who could give meaning to her work, her sacrifices and her commitments.
7. With his warm, affectionate and industrious presence, he would take care of their home and especially its inhabitants.
8. He was the person capable of creating and keeping the family and friendship network alive and functioning.

Therefore, it was very intense and painful disappointment when the man realised that the female soul had

per-

lost many of the characteristics that interested, indeed fascinated him. He no longer found in that new being the reserve, modesty and delicacy he dreamed of and sought. Now he felt her distant, often insecure, critical and dissatisfied with everything and everyone, especially him. He found he did not have a woman beside him who was a safe, warm, welcoming and loving harbour. He no longer found a woman beside him who had admiration, respect and acceptance for him.

When he then sought to build a healthy and functional family, he did not see, in the girls and women who were easily available for one-night stands and sexual relationships without deep feelings, the seriousness in dealing with the relationship and the relationship that he sought.

It was bitter for the man to realise that the woman was no longer complementary to him, but he often felt her to be his rival: at work, in the family, in social and political life. Now he was forced to approach her almost with fear, feeling that she was willing to do anything and put everything aside, in order to make her career and gain more and more power.

And then how could he believe that the woman he met could ever be the mother of his children, when he noticed that she was more interested in doing, than in caring; more capable professionally, than educationally. She was often absent, clumsy and unreliable in caring for her children, so much so that she increasingly delegated her educational and formative function to others: grandparents, , kindergarten, school and after-school teachers, with very often disastrous results on a psychological level.

Now the man feels the relationship with this new

woman considerably risky, not only because of increase in his
di-

sponsibility to betrayal and abandonment, but above all because of the easy accusations and complaints that he could have been subjected to at any time. Accusations of abuse, sexual harassment, violence, stalking, etc. Accusations and denunciations sometimes specious, other times clearly false or fabricated, which could be followed by removal from the marital home, deprivation of his property, but also of the love, esteem and even the presence and closeness of his children.

The consequences of this were numerous:

- Men's relationship with women has changed profoundly and substantially. This relationship has become markedly more guarded, disrespectful, suspicious, labile, inconstant, with an accentuation of defensive components and, consequently, with little or no readiness to trust, abandonment and unconditional love.
- Stripped of the responsibilities of the role of head of the family, man no longer feels the duty to responsibly provide for its maintenance. Just as he no longer feels a duty to its unity and stability.
- Wanting to find a minimum of gratification and warmth, he started to relate to his children in an excessively soft and permissive manner, cancelling and renouncing his role as an authoritative, secure, linear and firm guide (Slepoj, 2005, p.210). Being now the more insecure and emotionally fragile man, he has lost his ability to lead with linearity, firmness and responsibility

the upbringing of children but also the running of the family.

- His sexuality is also affected, becoming rarer, more difficult and problematic.
- Moreover, even more seriously, with removal of males from their traditional duties something else happened, which Slepj (2005, p. 137) summarises in these words:

"Many emphasise that the progressive weakening of paternal authority has devastating effects. In post-patriarchal society, there is in fact a widespread loss of strong cultural transmission, with the subsequent dissolution of concepts such as authority, truth, limits and morals, which in patriarchal culture were handed down by the father. With the disappearance of the father who educates, who imposes limits, who teaches right and wrong, according to some authors, the cornerstones of civil coexistence would disappear, with the consequent loss of orientation for young people, who are deprived of ethical and social coordinates within which to move. This is why many thinkers maintain that the 'death' of fathers also means the 'death' of children, who are condemned to live in a sphere of existential uncertainty, which makes the individual bear the burden of the difficulty of making choices and decisions that were previously established by the community in a shared manner.

In addition to elements such as authority, limits and the moral components of civilised living, to which Slepj refers, the lack of the educational function of fathers has also led to the loss of essential elements of the human component in the upbringing of children: such as determination and strength, linearity and courage, security and firmness. Qualities such as

that characterised paternal contributions and served to enrich and enhance the personal and social worth of the new generations. As a consequence of this, the assumption of responsibility by children of both sexes has clearly decreased, prolonging, in many cases indefinitely, the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

In this period of history, we can see that this unnatural, but above all unclear and ill-defined condition of what was supposed to be a system based on full and complete cooperation and collaboration has not only not borne the desired fruit, but has actually turned out to be a detrimental condition for both sexes, promoting and provoking not only the distancing from parental duties, but also intense conflicts and systematic clashes within families.

In the final analysis, the fact that males accepted different tasks and roles without batting an eyelid, in order to avoid being stigmatised by society as men who were out of touch with history and opposed women's emancipation, did not result in the victory of the feminine over the masculine, nor can we honestly say that there was a victory of the more advanced society over the patriarchal one. In fact, on closer inspection, it has been a serious defeat for everyone, since everyone has suffered and is suffering from the shortcomings of the purely masculine contributions in the running of the family institution.

The consequences for women

The initial enthusiasm

The first consequences, after the change of roles within

families and society, were clearly

positive for the female gender. The awareness that they are now protagonists not only in family life, but also in professional, economic, working, social and political life, has made it possible to experience this new reality with enthusiasm and joy. As it has not been difficult to conquer tasks and roles once almost exclusively the preserve of men, the number of trades and professions in which women have played a leading role has rapidly increased. The contribution of women spread like an avalanche in all social and professional fields: women teachers in all schools, women clerks, women workers, policemen, soldiers, aviators, managers, astro- nauts, ministers, etc. In addition, the more equal economic ratio of women to men has increased. In addition, the more equal economic relationship with men has greatly increased their bargaining power, both vis-à-vis other women and in their relations with their partners and society in general.

Stress and fatigue

However, soon enough many elements contributed to dampening the initial enthusiasm. The first difficulty that women had to face, and also endure, was the increased tiredness and stress caused by the considerable commitment and time required to cope with the various and varied tasks that they now have to face: keeping a close eye on the family's progress, bringing up children, preparing and studying to cope with the various work activities day after day. Nowadays, the most commonly used expressions by women are: 'I am always running'; 'I have to do everything in a hurry'; 'I run to prepare something to eat before I leave for work'; 'I run to take the children to school or to the grandparents'; to go to the office

and swipe my badge at the scheduled time';

"I run to pick up the children, to feed them, to get their homework done, to clean the house, to do the shopping..."

This constant chasing after the many, many activities has also become a race of women against themselves, as they are prevented from serenely enjoying the small pleasures of life, especially the family pleasures: the joys of motherhood, the pleasure of an intimate relationship with their children, the pleasure of a theatrical dialogue with their husbands.

Insecurity

Stress and fatigue are often also accompanied by anxiety, irritability and insecurity, which are caused by the fact that the new women, although they share with their partners the important affective investments in the running of the family, have in fact shifted most of their interests outside the family environment. The change in ideas, pace of life, behaviour and goals has become so profound and incisive that many women no longer recognise themselves. They no longer recognise what their role is; they no longer know who they are; they no longer know what is good and what is bad; they no longer know what they should do and how they should behave and act.

Ackerman, (1968, p. 152) describes this feeling of insecurity well:

"The mother. In turn, she claims to have a strength and security that she is far from possessing. Since she cannot feel secure in her husband's strength, she takes it upon herself to organise family life. She proves her worth by imitating the stereotype of male strength. She tries to be

omnipotent but only manages to be detached, impersonal and alienated from spontaneous maternal feelings. She strives fervently to do right by the children, but torments herself with the fear of making mistakes. Nevertheless, she pretends to be good at it, plays the part of the strong, superior, self-sufficient person, and often with this façade, she manages to deceive her husband. But fundamentally she remains insecure and dependent, in need of being pampered, while abhorring to confess it'.

This state of insecurity is accentuated when the woman feels her children's discomfort as well as her own, together with the unpleasant feeling of not feeling truly fulfilled, both as a woman and as a mother, since the results achieved are often modest in both areas. In some cases, she tries to eliminate the problem by denying it: 'is no problem, my children are fine, my family runs like any other, my work has no negative influence on it. I don't let them lack anything. Everything is as it should be.

In many other situations, however, anguished questions arise in her, to which she is unable to give coherent and decisive answers: "Is what I am doing right or wrong?" "Am I doing right or wrong?" Constantly dragged along and sometimes overwhelmed by doubt and perplexity, she asks herself: "Do I have the right to do what I am doing?" "Am I doing this for myself or for my family?" "Does my family really need this?"

Inner schizophrenia

The problem of dual presence: in the family and in a demanding job, also leads to an inner schizophrenia that is difficult to solve and cope with. Family commitment is clearly different from work commitment. The former requires great listening skills, intuition, tenderness, affection, willingness and giving towards others, and above all slow, elastic and fluid times. On the other hand, commitment to work requires a person who is quick-witted, efficient, rational, gritty, precise and methodical. Living well in both realities - family and work - is practically impossible, and trying to do requires a great deal of energy.

The conflict only increased emotionality, anxiety and guilt, accentuating fears and indecision in behaviour. The flight from guilt, inner difficulties, tension, resulted in a renunciation of real motherhood, in order to seek other types of substitute motherhood, which are less empowering and have fewer emotional implications, such as caring for one or more animals, volunteer work, long-distance adoption, etc.

Frustration and dissatisfaction

These two sentiments arose in the female soul when women felt that while they spent themselves in the thousands of occupations and tasks that society demands of them, they were no longer able to commit themselves so as achieve good results in the functions that their mothers and grandmothers were able to perform so well: to bring up their children in a serene, healthy and strong manner, so that the most important

qualities in a normal human being would mature in them.

Now, many mothers acutely feel the suffering of being forced to spend only small amounts of time with their children, which - they well understand - damages, sometimes slightly, sometimes seriously, the emotional and relational development of the children, but also the strong and deep bond that should have been established with them.

As mothers are no longer able to listen to their children at the most important and delicate moments of their development, they find that their ability to perceive and then satisfy their deepest and truest needs is diminished in many circumstances. As a result, the hurried and irritated communication that they manage to establish with difficulty is not suitable for understanding them and being understood. So much so that their children, feeling deprived of the presence, care and attention to which they were entitled and which they expected, adolescence, but often also before, turn against them with hurtful and sour words. They accuse them of never having time for true and deep listening, of never having time to play with them, of never having time for cuddling or laughing and joking together, of never having time to allow them to play with their classmates. The children themselves point out that in the evening, after a convulsive and stressful day, they, the mothers, are always too tired, to tell bedtime stories, and if they do, by hastily reading a few pages from a picture book, these stories have no taste. Just as the cooked or pre-cooked food they are frequently forced to gobble down has no taste.

The other reason for dissatisfaction among women relates to their inability to build and then maintain those family affective networks that their mothers and

grandmothers of the past knew how to build and maintain.

weave and build around their family, as they have neither the time, nor the will nor the serenity to manage this delicate and important task.

Numerous authors, especially women, have in their writings well highlighted these intimate frustrations and sufferings present in the female gender today.

For Harding (1951), the woman's unconscious imagination suffers from these changes. It is opposed to rational thought, which is conscious and therefore willed, directed and coordinated by reason and concrete thought. The woman's unconscious imagination is inextricably bound up with her femininity and motherhood and therefore demands to be an impeccable mother, a faithful wife, the queen of an environment, the home that she would like to be a warm and cosy nest, rich in elements of affection and care. Her unconscious urges her to have a deep and complementary bond with the man. To be the soul of her husband, to integrate with him, to walk through life together with him, is her deepest desire.

When this imagery is frustrated, subverted, and turned on its head by rational thinking that sees a woman as opposed to and competing a man, not at all willing to act as a complement to his soul, unwilling to take on a predominant role in the family, home and affections, and unwilling to engage in a nurturing relationship, there is an intimate clash that has considerable consequences. Frustration and dissatisfaction arise above all when women realise that their constant criticism, disrespect, mistrust and arrogant bravado towards men makes men absolutely dissatisfied, so that they

see them as being at a disadvantage.

away from them, frightened, perplexed but also deeply disappointed.

On the other hand, Western education tries to eradicate, as far as possible, every manifestation of the female instinctuality related to motherhood, reproduction and care, so that these qualities remain dormant and neglected in most women. In return, this type of education offers them the intellectual and rational aspects present in working and professional life, which cannot fully satisfy them (Harding, 1951, p. 92). (Harding, 1951, p. 92). But in order to be able to emerge in the world of work, women must necessarily bring to the surface and develop all those masculine qualities that are ordinarily latent in them. *"As a result, many women in trades and professions are characterised, to a greater or lesser extent, by masculine traits and habits that bear witness to their changed psychological attitude (Harding E., (1951, p. 84). Thus the woman: 'Instead of being kind and condescending and letting herself be carried along by her feelings, in other words, instead of acting as a feminine being, she begins to pursue an end, neither more nor less than the man, and more often than not becomes aggressive, authoritarian and stubborn. Her undeveloped and undisciplined masculine qualities in the depths of her psyche take control of her personality (Harding, 1951, p. 86).*

However, the consequences of this castration of female attitudes are particularly traumatic and painful: *"A dark and deep sense of inferiority and incompleteness generally haunts the woman who, preoccupied with her profession, has not given love to any human being. She will try to find compensation for this sense of insufficiency in the outside*

world, in the hope that the recognition of the

*his merits social will take the place left
empty by love' (Harding, 1951, p. 242).*

For Bonanate (2008, p. 47):

"There is so much unhappiness in women today. There is that di- sarony with themselves that creates neurosis, an aggressive use their bodies, a loss of identity. At work, in the social environment, in everyday life, the world of women has fallen into line with the male models that have consecrated a society based on the arrogance of the strongest and smartest, the omnipotence of money, success at any price, power as an instrument of domination and exclusion. In this way, women have ended up reinforcing precisely that often ruthless and cruel male chauvinism that they wanted to fight, coming out with broken bones, and often in a coffin. The female planet is losing a fundamental appointment with man to complement and help each other not in competitiveness, but in collaboration and integration, in mutual respect. In this vacuum, the worst instincts of the strongest fall like a cleaver on the weakest, with rage, cruelty and madness. And feminicide records ever more ruthless chapters').

And again the author herself (Bonanate, 2008, p. 21):

"...the risk of wasting this new springtime of women exists. And it is that of not questioning, outside of any partisan ideology, why women have often become neo- mics to themselves. She betrays the most authentic feminine 'virtues', such as tenderness, the unlimited capacity for sharing, her creativity, respect for her own body, in order to allow herself to be plagiarised by the media of the consumer society, by the tyranny

of money, success, power, by an unlimited freedom that becomes slavery. To adopt the kind of masculinism that feminism has fought against, in order to achieve positions of power, to make a career, to obtain visibility at all costs, which often results in aggression and abuse of those we meet.

And so, while the man forced into tasks that do not suit him suffers because he does not feel fully realised in his natural role, the same is true for women who, having taken on many of the male tasks, have realised that they have traded the most precious, beautiful, important and characteristic elements of their femininity for these.

For Morandi (1994, p.23): *'Equality' turns out to be a false purpose intended to adulterate the relationship through what is called the liberalisation of the sexes and which in reality turns out to be, as we widely see, a loss of identity'.*

For Magna (2004, pp. 59-76): *'In recent decades, we have witnessed considerable changes in the male-female relationship: the condition of women has changed a great deal, but this liberation on the level of action does not seem to have solved her deep-seated problems. Believing she has to free herself from man's doom, she has assumed masculine patterns to the detriment of her own femininity, contradicting her deepest nature'.*

Also for Ackerman (1968, p. 104): *'Women today are freer, often more self-confident, but they compete as men, and in so doing they move away from femininity'.*

Commitment to educational activity in general decreases, and above all, educational activity aimed at developing skills and culture conducive to marriage and the family decreases. All this leads women to increase their investment in themselves, spending more and more for pleasure of feeling beautiful and desirable, but also through the pursuit of ephemeral and trivial joys and pleasures to try to overcome inner conflicts and find lost inner joy through these expedients. Extra-marital adventures become a means of feeling alive, desired and accepted, a means of putting anxieties and inner contradictions to rest, at least temporarily.

The relationship man

These changes in roles and behaviour that have come about in a fairly short period of time have upset the rules in relationships and the possibilities of understanding and engaging with the male gender. With the increased responsiveness to men, accusations and threats, demands and blackmail became easier and easier. The man perpetually assumed the role of a scapegoat for women's stress, insecurity and frustrations, but at the same time has become a counterpart from whom more and more demands and demands have been made, ever more vehemently and arrogantly. Accusations and demands are not only increased endlessly, but are also often contradictory, if not specious, as they often arise from obvious conflicts, dissatisfaction and inner contradictions.

The consequences for both sexes

For both sexes, one of the most serious consequences has been alienation. Despite the fact that in all schools of all levels, from kindergarten to university and PhD, men and women are together, one next to the other, ... 'to better socialise and understand each other', teachers confidently affirm, never before have the two sexes felt divided by an abyss of incommunicability, incomprehension, suspicion, mistrust, fear and mutual resentment.

Even though our desire for love would lead us to a situation of attachment and bonding with the other, our exaggerated and exasperated pride created by the new condition and new roles makes us feel this letting go in the arms of the other as risky, dangerous and detrimental to our autonomy and dignity. This ambivalence blocks us and makes us incapable of fully and fearlessly welcoming the other into our lives.

In short, in these times in history, it is very difficult in the eyes and hearts of men to find a woman who has, if not all, at least some of the female characteristics that are indispensable for creating a good family: a woman, therefore, who is capable of tenderness and gentleness, a woman who is capable of care and hospitality. Similarly, in the eyes of young women, men seem to have disappeared who are capable of taking on the responsibilities of a family and are therefore self-confident, strong, decisive and faithful, but also able to relate well with their partners. In addition, each member of the couple no longer knows how to relate to the other, as there are no longer any yardsticks indicating which virtues he should have

"a 'good girl' or as it should be 'a good boy'. Everything has become confused, messy, ambiguous and unstable.

It is for these reasons that a large proportion of both sexes now turn their backs on the idea of a stable, lasting, serious and constructive relationship, not to say a family, but even just a semblance of stable cohabitation, preferring instead a continuous succession of small, insignificant sentimental and sexual 'stories', without any construction, without any future prospects, without any life planning. It is as if each sex, in the eyes and heart of the other, had lost the most important and useful characteristics for creating a stable couple union and thus a new, functional family.

Prevention

If we want to decrease, if not eradicate, the aggression, violence and conflicts present in couples and families, it is clear that we must act on the causes that lead to them. We have written about these causes at length in the previous chapter. Changing the social and family environment in which the couple lives is crucial to implement primary prevention, which aims to prevent conflicts from erupting in couples that are so frequent and intense that it is difficult to deal with them adequately.

To imagine, as is often the case at present, that these phenomena can be dealt with almost exclusively by means of ever stricter and more repressive laws, almost always to be applied to one of the two genders: the male sex, is not only morally questionable, but also fundamentally wrong, since there is no doubt that violence, albeit in different ways and with different instruments, is expressed by both sexes, whereas the real causes of the problems of couples come from far away and are, as we have seen, many and deep.

Moreover, the attitude of constant criminalisation of the male sex is counterproductive, as it accentuates both a greater female reactivity to any attitude, even-

that the most spontaneous and well-intentioned coming from the opposite sex is the anger of males, who feel systematically and unjustly accused, as well as belittled, in their affective, intellectual, psychological, ethical and moral qualities. On the other hand, it is illusory to think of overcoming violence with more violence, in a perpetual, forced, repetition. Aggression and the violence that often follows from it can only be eradicated by recognising the circumstances and conditions that generate it and then working courageously to avoid them (Hacker, 1971, p. 117). Effective intervention in most if not all of the problems in couples and families through appropriate therapies is practically impossible today, given the huge number of couples and families torn apart by conflict, aggression and violence. It would be like trying to empty the sea with a spoon.

With these basic premises in mind, and while waiting for civil society, state laws, and the services deputed to couples and families, such as family counselling centres, to finally engage in prevention and promotion, so as to be able to eliminate, if not all, then at least a good part of the most important causes of conflict, individual couples will certainly be able to improve their relationship, as soon as they are able to take some basic concepts into account.

Some basic concepts

All relationships are difficult

There are no easy relationships. There are no relationships that do not require commitment, sacrifice or that are free of tension and suffering. Even when we are in a very simple relationship, such as with a pet: a sweet-eyed, tender dog or an affectionate kitten to cuddle and stroke, even in these cases, along with moments of gratification, pleasure and joy, there are bound to be periods of difficulty, effort and sacrifice. Not only that, but it is natural that at certain , moments of irritation and intolerance may arise: "I would like to go on a nice trip with my friends, but what am I to do with this kitten?" "What a nuisance this dog is: how many vaccinations I have to give her and how much money I have to spend on feeding, cleaning and caring for her! Whether it's sunny or rainy, whether it's a holiday or a working day, whether I've slept or not, he always wants to go out for his walk at seven in the morning!"

It should also be easy to recognise that human relationships are considerably more complex and difficult than those we can establish with an animal, so it is only natural that they require not only a great deal of serenity and inner maturity, but also a great willingness to commit and make sacrifices, as well as a great deal of patience, acceptance and tolerance.

Relationships are much more difficult when there are psychological problems of a certain relevance.

Relationships, all relationships, become more difficult, if not impossible, when they are marred by psychological problems that alter or disrupt the very abilities to socialise and integrate with others. These psychological problems are easily recognisable, as they manifest themselves in excessive anxiety, depression, easy irritability, fears, phobias, etc. These and other symptoms of inner discomfort significantly affect communication, listening, understanding and our relationship with others, especially with those closest to us. In such cases, when the disturbances are so intense that the sufferer and those close to him or her suffer, a careful specialist examination necessary in order to assess the seriousness of the problems and to indicate the most effective therapies to resolve them.

All relationships can have moments of difficulty or crisis.

Just as there is no such thing as good weather all the time, but clear periods and days alternate with stormy ones, when dark clouds loom from a gloomy sky, shaken by lightning and thunder that seem to shake the earth, as well as frighten hearts, so too there are days or periods when the couple's chemistry seems perfect, so that warmth and joy offer themselves to the couple like sparkling glasses of champagne to be sipped in the moonlight. However, there are other days or periods when angry glances, tense, iridescent words, and irritating, unfriendly behaviour seem to be the order of the day.

They are designed to inflame minds even more, thereby harming each other, themselves and the marriage. Ultimately, couple relationships are not something stable and immutable; on the contrary, their balance is often unstable and precarious, so they need constant adjustment. That is why conflicts are present, to a greater or lesser extent and in a more or less serious and frequent way, in all intimate relationships, but they are only considered pathogenic when they are not mastered and properly managed.

It is essential to understand the correct meaning-to love.

In the meantime, it is essential to accept that, in the field of love, our task certainly cannot end with enjoying love or the pleasure of being loved.

Loving has quite different meanings.

As Dacquino (1994, p. 267) puts it: 'He who possesses true affective availability does not privilege love as a feeling, but as a commitment; he does not therefore limit himself to living his affections, but builds on them; he does not want to command, but is also willing to serve, he does not want passivity, but doing together'. If the falling in love phase is mostly made up of illusions that vanish after a few months or a few years at most, love is a deep feeling that requires a lot of will, wisdom, constancy, humility and courage in its management. To enter into a loving relationship essentially means to start as two, a journey of growth in which it is important to accept the needs and demands of the other person with joy. This journey requires a remarkable

willingness to accept and

listening, a lot of gentleness and tenderness, all combined with a considerable amount of responsibility and commitment, aimed at the physical and psychological well-being of the other.

Therefore, a very careful use of the words and expressions we use is necessary. These today, unfortunately, taking no account of the sensitivity and suffering of others, often run wild and convey, towards those whom we should respect, love and protect, gratuitous and excessive accusations, expletives and vulgar insults.

Since loving means caring and concern for the person next to us and doing everything, even with personal sacrifice, to make them well, both physically and psychologically, it is clear that the focus of love must be shifted from 'I' to 'you'. Therefore, not 'you are mine', which has the form of possession, but 'I am yours', in which love is donation (Pirrone 2014, p. 57). Since the fundamental dimension of love is relationship, to love it is necessary to give oneself through dialogue, friendship, tenderness and cuddling. Loving means being understanding towards the other, not only accepting his or her limitations and faults, but also valuing his or her qualities.

Loving also means seeing the couple as a unit, a team. Therefore, together we win and together we lose. Certainly, the attitude in which one poses as rivals, ready to enjoy each other's limitations, ready to fight and each other, in order to prevail over the other, cannot be adequate at all.

Since the couple's relationship, like any interpersonal relationship, is based on the principle of mutual gratification, it

is also based on the principle of mutual satisfaction.

To love means to give oneself reciprocally and to offer with generosity and joy to the loved one the most beautiful things that we can give within ourselves, while welcoming with gratitude and joy what we receive from the other (Dacquino, 1994, p. 277).

Furthermore, it is good to bear in mind that every act or feeling we have needs precise rules. When we remove the necessary responsibility and self-discipline from our love and emotional behaviour, so that we are only guided and transported by the impulses and needs of the moment, it becomes almost impossible to give stability, correctness and effectiveness to solid relationships that are fundamental to our lives. For this reason, the theory of spontaneity, which has had a major influence on relational behaviour in the last half-century, is not at all valid, and is also very dangerous. This theory, by tolerating the instinctual elements of the human being to the bitter end, has made it permissible to seek one's own pleasure and satisfy one's own desires, regardless of the needs and, above all, the suffering of the other (Dacquino, 1994, p. 266). This has inevitably made all sentimental and love relationships poor, fragile, and also very conflictual.

In order to grow, true love needs stability and this, in turn, is essential for individual, family and social well-being. If the couple is a much stronger entity than the individual person, working to stabilise the relationship with a partner allows us to have that inner tranquillity and assurance of affection that can offer us security, serenity and fulfilment that each of us ardently desire (Dacquino, 1994, p. 277).

Effective dialogue

Communication is an indispensable element of relational life. In the initial phase, it is necessary to get to know the other person, their qualities and availability, both in giving and receiving, their needs and desires, their possibilities and capabilities as a future husband or wife, as a future father or mother. At a later stage, dialogue is indispensable not only to discover the changes in those close to us, but also to be able to adapt to each new and different reality, which the positive or negative experiences of life over time bring.

It is difficult to imagine a relationship without good dialogue as the basis of it. Verbal language is certainly an important instrument of dialogue, but it is not the only one. Non-verbal communication, made up of gestures and behaviour, is equally important. A gift, a tender gesture, an attitude of solidarity, the exchange of a mature sexuality, capable of communicating our love, our disposability and care for the other person, are in a couple behaviour and attitudes that are as valuable as and more than a thousand words.

By exchanging our thoughts, fears and daily difficulties with the person we love, dialogue allows us both to be helped by the other and be close to them with concern and tenderness. By saying the right words at the right time, we can give our loved ones the support and comfort they need. By valuing the qualities of the other person, we can certainly improve his or her self-esteem, so that he or she feels more serene, strong and self-confident.

Effective dialogue is easy to recognise because it succeeds in satisfying the needs and expectations of the person with whom we relate; therefore, it is able to produce well-being and serenity for the loved one, the couple and the whole family.

Its most important characteristics are:

1. *Clarity, sincerity and loyalty.*

For dialogue to be effective, the language should be as clear, simple, sincere and transparent as possible, but also honest and fair. Lies, subterfuge and even worse, betrayals of promises made, are capable of undermining even the most solid relationships. However, since words can produce considerable suffering, effective communication is not about saying everything that is on one's mind, but about building, through love and respect for the other's sensitivity, a sincere and loyal relationship. The least that can be asked of two people who love each other and want to avoid unnecessary conflict is to avoid unnecessarily hurting each other through words, phrases and attitudes expressed without having been filtered by common sense and expediency. In the final analysis, sincerity must be avoided at all costs by turning into cruelty. Therefore, in any relationship, keeping silent is also of great importance.

2. *Acceptance and welcome*

Accepting the other means accepting their different personality and sexual identity. Accepting the other also means accepting their different role. It is from this basic acceptance that positive confrontation arises and develops. When all this is lacking, so that we would like the other to

be-

whether as we dream of him and desire him or whether he still has the same characteristics as when we met him and fell in love with him, we will bitterly realise that dialogue becomes difficult or ceases altogether. It is also important to recognise that each element of the couple comes from a past, goes through a present and wants to project itself into a future of which there is no certainty. Therefore, in a rich and living relationship, continuous mutual adaptation necessary.

It is also necessary to embrace our own and others' frailties. Alongside strength and security, each one of us, due to the suffering and trauma of our past, also has some or many weaknesses. When we do not accept them in our painstaking and futile search for perfection, and consequently display a judgmental attitude, we risk compromising the spontaneity of the other person, who in the future will try to avoid expressing the deeper content of his or her thoughts and emotions. At the same time, we risk unnecessarily stimulating his or her defences and angry, aggressive reactions.

Dialogue is effective when it succeeds in accepting and taking into account the ideas of others. Since we are equal as human beings, when communication is good, it is easy to accept, without feeling undermined, each other's decisions and opinions, especially when these arise from a difference in roles, different sexual characteristics, specific qualities and experiences. Since truth is never just one, and has many facets, we should learn not to feel aggrieved or devalued if our ideas are not

always shared (Dacquino, 1994, p. 304). On the other hand, we know that the needs of a man are different from those a woman. Each individual's needs can be or translate in different ways from one another. No two people are the same, with the same tastes, the same inner reality, the same desires.

As Ackerman (1968, p. 35) puts it:

"The difference between spouses in family relationships should not be considered a danger, any more than sexual difference. On the contrary, it should be hailed as evidence of a complement to the self; as it is possibility learning new things and realising oneself better".

Complementarity in every relationship is the best tool that couples have invented to succeed reducing the number and severity of conflicts. In family relationships, it supports unity, helps unity and participation (Ackerman, 1968, p. 82). And again the same author: 'Men and women can be equally respected for what they give to the family, to life, to society, but the quality of this respect must be different' (Ackerman 1968, p. 223). And it is for this reason that role complementarity is still used today by millions of couples in most parts of the world.

For Ackerman (1968, p. 115): *'Positive complementarity exists when the members of the couple or family triangle experience a mutual satisfaction of needs, in such a way as to promote a positive emotional development of relationships and individuals'.*

With this strategy, each knows and accepts that there are decisions and areas of family life, such as bringing up children, that are the prerogative or specific responsibility of the other.

The clearly negative experiences of the last few decades in the Western world have amply confirmed that discussing, deciding and taking every decision together, from the most important and fundamental decisions concerning the basic course of the family to the most mundane everyday decisions, even if this appears to be 'nice, modern and up-to-date', has in fact proved to be the best way to provoke and increase conflicts and, consequently, also aggressive and violent behaviour in relationships.

3. *Listening*

Effective dialogue should not consist of a struggle of words and arguments to fight and overpower the thoughts and ideas of others, but a means understanding and listening to the soul movements of the beloved person in order to harmonise with them. For this reason, in discussions, it is good to try to understand the other person's point of view and to reflect, more on the needs they express, not only with words, but also with silences, rather than on the response to overpower their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

In order to preserve a good understanding, it is necessary to decisively break the vicious circle that is often created: "He made me... he told me and then I told him... I made him..." which could be translated as: "He

said this unpleasant or even worse offensive thing to me, I hit him back with something even worse and more offensive. The experience of couples, who live a healthy and harmonious relationship, shows us instead that it is much better to give answers that are totally different from those the other person has given us and that have made us suffer, or from those that the impulse of the moment instinctively suggests. This strategy stimulates the person we love to reflect on their words and actions and creates a psychological debt of gratitude to us in their soul.

4. Delicacy.

Often with strangers we tend to measure our words and gestures so as not to offend. In order to be accepted, we try to have courteous, delicate and respectful manners. In order not to be unpleasant, we try to be cheerful and in a good mood, while with the person with whom we share our life and whom we should love and respect more than any other, everything seems permissible. Therefore, we tend to use ways and words towards him/her that we would never use with others: '...because if he/she really loves me, he/she must accept me as I am. Because if he/she loves me to the core, he/she has to put up with my nervousness and irritating behaviour.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Rudeness, abusive, humiliating, hurtful words, excessive impulsiveness, lack of patience and aggressiveness drive away, frighten and put the person next to us on the defensive; they damage their patience, interest and love for us, and are likely to stimulate them to adopt other harmful and destructive behaviour.

Words are not always helpful in coparenting. It is much better to keep quiet when we feel tension, anxiety, aggression and irritability within ourselves, due to which we tend to be grumpy, irritating or too sensitive and reactive to every word the other person says, even in good faith. It is wiser to avoid retorting when we realise that words worsen the relationship, tend to devalue and humiliate the other person, affect the other person's deepest feelings. Better to speak only when we feel that what we say will give him serenity, comfort him, help him to understand our needs and arguments. Ultimately, it is often possible to defuse the tensions created and re-establish a serene and positive climate, simply by not responding with aggression to the other person's aggressive words (Dacquino, 1994, p. 265).

5. The pleasure meeting the other

Even if this is not always possible, even if it is not always possible to find that much sought-after understanding, inner tenacity in approaching each other should be there at all times and on all occasions, especially on the most difficult and complex occasions and situations. For this reason, while it is helpful not to let unsaid things or small negative realities accumulate, which can later erupt into an uncontrollable quarrel, it is disastrous to continually discuss everything, just as it is damaging to continually rehash the past: "Remember that time you told me...". "Think of the time you looked at that woman in my presence". Often in quarrels, distant episodes from the past are brought up again that should be and remain buried forever and not continually brought up.

One must also remind oneself that compromise is not a loss of something but an achievement. Likewise, however, one must bear in mind that when one accepts conciliation proposals, one must then stick to what has been agreed.

6. *Work and commitments*

Sometimes we argue for the sake of arguing: because we are nervous, tired, frustrated in our needs, because of work or unhappy relationships with colleagues, friends or other family members. For this reason, when one wants to start a discussion that could escalate, one must always ask oneself where one's irritability really stems from and thus whether it is really worth starting a fight.

Understanding listening, finding understanding, limiting one's ego, require great skills and considerable inner disposition. When these are scarce, because we have spent them on work, family or extra-family commitments, the residual energies are not able to enable us to engage in effective dialogue. Work, like many other commitments, even those of considerable social importance, can create excessive emotional involvement: occupying our thoughts, taking up a large part of our energies, engaging the will beyond acceptable limits.

Let us therefore avoid leaving scraps of our time and energy for the meeting, the communion, the exchange with the person we love. Instead, let us carve out hours and days in our daily or weekly lives that we can devote to them serenely, willingly and to the utmost.

of our energies and capacities to affective, loving and sexual dialogue and exchange.

7. Positive feelings.

The duties of a life partner are also those of listening, soothing and comforting. What strengthens the union is the participation and sharing of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Therefore, emotional involvement is essential, which leads to experiencing, as if they were our own, joys and gratifications of the other, but also their sadness and suffering. However, the expectations we have in the field of love are often many, too many and absolutely unrealistic. Since we cannot be sure that the other person can satisfy all our needs and offer us, not happiness, but at least the inner serenity that we have always lacked, it is pointless to ask the person we love for more than they can give us. This person, like us, has limits that he or she must accept and respect, if he or she is not to be forced out by an excessive load of demands and complaints continually poured on his or her soul.

That is why it is good to avoid constant whining: 'You don't do, you are not..., you don't understand me..., you don't try to...'. It is better to strive to communicate mature and positive feelings such as optimism, trust, courage and esteem. These feelings help one to grow and to face life's difficulties and adversities with joy and serenity.

Optimism cheerfulness

To prevent conflicts and mutual aggression, a healthy optimism is certainly very helpful. A positive state of mind allows us to observe reality with a serene and joyful spirit.

so that we can have confidence in ourselves but also in those around us. Optimism allows us, among other things, to rely on the positive qualities of the other person, and to avoid emphasising and exalting in our souls the negative aspects that annoy us and cause us pain. Healthy optimism can also enhance a couple's ability to recognise and deal with the problems that arise every day, always finding the right compromise.

If we can accompany our life as a couple with a cheerful and cheerful attitude and mood, it will also be easier to live serene, stable and lasting relationships. Feeling happy, having fun together, sharing a joke or a joke with a liberating laugh, makes the couple feel more open to life and change, helps to defuse difficult situations that inevitably arise, allows us to relieve and eliminate the inevitable tensions, and, in short, makes us better enjoy the pleasure of being together. Of course, cheerfulness should not be used to mock or scoff at the other, as this attitude produces deleterious fruits in all relationships.

Forgiveness

One must always be ready and willing to ask for forgiveness and to forgive because we all have something deserving of absolution. On the other hand, how can you claim to love someone if you are not willing to accept their imperfections, flaws and limitations?

Per Pirrone (2014, p56):

"Intelligence is needed to understand that we all have flaws and that therefore the other person must be loved, despite their limitations, with all their flaws. And to do this requires the will: 'I want to love you'.. Goodness means wanting to support other person to realise himself fully as a person, to help him develop his qualities to the full and to acquire new capacities that are not innate to him.

Forgiveness allows us to rebuild our relationship together on more solid foundations, it helps us overcome , it allows us to enter into deeper communion as we can better understand each other's motives.

When the other has hurt us, we can pretend that nothing happened or try to analyse the reasons for the crisis through the warm light of feelings, while on the part of the person asking for forgiveness, it is important to try to understand why the other felt hurt and humiliated.

Forgiveness has many positive sides:

- It makes one feel better. *"According to numerous studies, when we manage to lose, we feel better, as if freed from a burden, we can turn the page and look to the future"* (Hofmann, 2015).
- It brings serenity and peace back into one's life.
- *By erasing the past, it is easier to build the future.*

- Forgiveness changes people from within, because even if it does not make one forget the evil received, it enables one to carry it within oneself without rancour.
- In turn, people who forgive, feeling better, will later have an easier time forgiving (Hofmann, 2015, p. 99).
- Those who forgive easily are also better off physically (Hofmann, 2015, p. 99).
- Forgiveness re-establishes contact with the other, brings dialogue alive, reopens a process of growth.

Nevertheless, forgiveness is difficult because of self-love, jealousy and pride. Resentful and psychically less stable personalities forgive with more difficulty (Hofmann, 2015, p. 99). (Hofmann, 2015, p. 99). Young children forgive more easily, because they know that daddy's reproaches and mummy's scolding do not detract from the fact that they both love their children very much. Older people are also easier to forgive, as they know from personal experience that it is in our DNA to make mistakes and that everyone makes many mistakes in life. In addition, maturity allows one to control one's emotions better.

It is more difficult for them to forgive young people, who do not accept or tolerate the mistakes of others, while they are well disposed to cover up, erase and excuse propriety. They also have difficulty forgiving people who have a high level of narcissism.

It is easier to forgive when one has built a solid and strong love. "If two are very close, if their relationship is satisfying or they have invested a lot in creating and

maintaining it, it is easier to forgive.

it will be easier to turn a blind eye to offences' (Hofmann, 2015, p. 99). Of course, forgiveness is easier when the offender admits guilt and shows repentance (Hofmann, 2015).

Caring for relationships

Just as our bodies get sick and therefore need a doctor to listen to our shoulders, palpate our liver and abdomen in order to diagnose our illness, and then advise us on the most suitable treatment, so too relationships, all relationships, can be either mildly or severely ill and may need someone to examine, understand the source of the problems that beset them and help us to cure them. That is why a disturbed or sick relationship does not at all mean that it is dead and therefore only needs a good funeral officiated by judges, experts and lawyers.

This simple, banal concept is often neither understood nor readily accepted, both by individual couples and, above all, by social policies aimed at couples and families. Legislation is passed to speed up divorce, which is then the funeral of couples and often of families, but little or nothing is done to prevent and then cure these same fundamental realities. Moreover, there are very few couples in crisis who ask to embark on a path to help them face and if possible solve the problems that beset their love relationships.

Immersed for decades in the sweetened images of romantic love in films and TV, we believe, indeed we are certain, that 'either is or there isn't love; and if there isn't, one must

take note of it as soon as possible: first by separating, then by starting divorce proceedings as soon as possible and finally by looking for another, if possible better and more trustworthy love object'.

Instead, as Harding says, an attitude of greater responsibility towards the social aspect of marriage would make the need for divorce rarer than it is today, even when one of the spouses falls in love with a third person. (Harding, 1951, p. 236).

Love, which is often presented in films and soap operas as a gift that gently descends from a rosy sky and settles on our hearts, should instead be compared to a house that has to be built by two people, hour by hour, day by day, brick by brick, with effort, with sweat, by getting our hands dirty. But that is not enough. Even when you have finished building it and it seems solid and functional, it needs, like all houses, constant repair work, if not complete renovation. These things require a lot of commitment, effort and personal sacrifice, as well as great trust and willingness.

In short, there are not, except in our imagination, permanently healthy and happy loves that we can enjoy on our own; instead, there are loves that have to be realised day by day, loves that have to be protected so that they do not break down, loves that have to be repaired or even rebuilt when the storms and earthquakes of life have seriously damaged them. As Pirrone (2014, p. 57) says: 'Loving means working on oneself and on the relationship to make it better and better or to heal it when it tends to deteriorate'.

Since the strategies used in couples to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings are sometimes so inadequate that they often trigger vicious circles, so that couples tend to respond with increasingly negative behaviour to inadequate communication stimuli, it is necessary to rely on a third person, an expert in this field, to help us. It is understandable, therefore, the importance of interventions aimed at providing couples with tools to develop and promote personal and couple resources, both to reduce risk factors and to contain them and not make them worse.

Some of these 'doctors and psychologists of the couple' are oriented towards prevention, i.e. the reduction of risk factors of marital conflicts, others towards treatment and thus the strengthening of the couple's competences.

Couple therapies

Therapy for marital disorders aims to decrease suffering and improve the poor functioning of the relationship between spouses. There are numerous programmes aimed at couples.

Some of these are very simple and also fun, such as the traditional Japanese *Shindai* method in which, when a conflict arises between a couple, each contender takes a pillow with feathers in it on which an incision has been made. The two fight with the pillow. The battling ground is usually the marriage bed. The game ends, in each other's arms, when the feathers have run out or when one of them gives up. This very old method basically allows the aggression present in the couple at a certain moment to be discharged by means of a game in which

there is no real harm done and, on the other hand, there is a lot of laughter, while the feathers flutter in the air as they come out of the cushions and then gently fall on the contenders, as if to pacify them.

Classical couple therapies are carried out with the help of experienced therapists who are able to build a good alliance with both spouses. These therapies should be sought whenever one or both partners have a long-lasting ache that cannot be overcome independently. Often, repetitive dysfunctional dynamics are generated in couples, which fuel incomprehensions, conflicts and clashes in a more or less open manner. These dynamics tend to repeat themselves, in a kind of vicious circle that retraces the same stages, the same paths and sometimes even the same problems. For these reasons, a third person, with specific skills, has a better chance of understanding the dynamics underlying the problems and can offer the couple new and more adequate tools to look at the problems from a different perspective, which makes it easier both to understand them and to face and overcome them.

Couples therapies are numerous and each one aims to achieve certain goals through specific techniques. Generally speaking, the most common goals found in the various therapies aim to:

- Relieving the suffering present in the couple.
- Focus on the critical points that make communication ineffective and improve them in order to create a new balance.
- Overcoming the current crisis.

- Recovering understanding.
- Appropriate more effective relational modes that promote positive change.
- Improve the malfunctioning of the relationship, so as to experience it in a more constructive and satisfying way (Ackerman, 1970, pp. 124 - 125).
- Strengthening the ability to solve problems together.
- Reducing conflict by improving the way it is dealt with.
- Encourage the complementarity of relationships on a sexual, emotional and social level (Ackerman, 1970, pp. 124 -125).
- Strengthening immunity against the disruptive effects of emotional crisis.
- It promotes the development of the relationship and that of each spouse as an individual.
- Strengthening the ability to solve problems together.

Family therapies

Family therapy is a form of psychotherapy that has the family system and the relationships within this system as its basic unit. The therapy of emotional disorders in the family originated primarily in order to offer proper treatment of child and adult patients with psychological problems that originated in the family environment. Over time, numerous schools of family therapy emerged. In the one proposed by Ackerman (1970, p. 99), the therapist's aim is to mobilise a beneficial form of empathy and communication between the various

members of the family group.

The aim is not only to bring about and increase an invigorating and constructive emotional exchange between them, but also to change parts of the family organisation in such a way as to create new ways of relating and thus also new balances. At the same time, the therapist will try to break down rigidities within the communication and make it more flexible. This therapeutic approach, when marital conflicts are also present, is very helpful in dealing with them, resolving them or at least limiting the damage, which can fall on any member of the family group, especially on its younger members.

Therapy begins with a psychosocial assessment of the family as a whole. By clarifying the family's family reality to the group and addressing relational and existential dysfunctions, the specialist helps them to examine these dysfunctions calmly and objectively, suggesting the most appropriate ways to deal with them and, if possible, overcome them. This is achieved by barriers and defensive masking, confusion and misunderstandings, while at the same time taking steps to give affective support, gratification and appropriate emotions to each member of the group. The therapist also tries to offer all family members new, more suitable and useful ways of relating. He works on present resistances, establishing an empathic relationship between the family members and between them and himself. With his own way of being, he offers a series of positive relational models. At the same time, he supports and helps family members in the best way to deal with both fears and guilt.

One of the most modern and current family therapies is *intergenerational therapy* (Framo, 1996).

This therapy is based on the idea that individual histories are strongly intertwined with those of previous generations. Therefore, to understand and help the individual, one must necessarily observe and understand the previous generations. For such therapy, each family system has its own cultural identity, which is passed on to subsequent generations through the myths, family mandates and scripts that shape its present. Trigenerational observation attempts to reconstruct the intergenerational storyline in order to understand the links, behaviours and experiences of the present and the unmet needs of the past.

Although family therapies can be carried out in various contexts, their place of choice should be the Family Advice Bureau, since in this service the family should find specialised help in an atmosphere of respect and deep empathy.

Family counselling

Family counselling differs from family therapy in that it is carried out by trained professionals who work with specific methodologies according to the guidelines of the Carl Rogers School (2000): non-directiveness, professionalism, comprehensiveness, interdisciplinarity, a relationship full of trust in the client's abilities and empathy with the client. Furthermore, using non-directiveness, family counselling recognises and guarantees during therapy the exclusion of any ideological and psycho- logical pressure from the counsellor towards the client.

An excellent professionalism of the counsellor is important in order to guarantee the client the ability to help him/her.

expectations on the part of those who care for him/her. Globality and multi-disciplinarity enable the counsellor to observe, welcome and help each person who comes to him/her, taking into account all his/her characteristics: sexual, emotional, psychological, social, moral, relational etc. Since counselling is intended to help the person in his/her entirety, the counsellor acknowledges the person's ability to understand his/her real problems and to freely make his/her own choices with maturity and responsibility; self-determining, when with the help of the counsellor he/she has understood his/her deepest and truest problems, but also possible solutions.

The counselling relationship can certainly start with the most urgent problem that is besetting the client at that moment, but later it must extend to the whole person and also to those close to them.

Family mediation

A service to the separating couple is provided by family mediation, which aims to help the couple to work through the separation and reorganise themselves as parents, in order to continue to be good educators towards their children (Mazzei, 2002).

According to Di Nuovo, (2008): *'Mediation is used when each party is unable to overcome its own point of view, lacks confidence in the good faith of the other, does not know how to communicate and manage emotions adequately, and alters the relationship to the point where it becomes irreparably conflictual'*.

The mediator is a professional with specific training in mediation, negotiation and conflict management, with in-depth knowledge law, psychology and sociology, with particular regard to family and parental relations. This professional, endeavouring to be fair and impartial, has the task of facilitating the couple's communication, so that the parents themselves become able to decide fairly and functionally on the many problems they still have in common: financial aspects, management and education of the children, relations with other relatives and so on. The objectives are agreed and predefined already in the first meetings and the aim is to alleviate the couple's suffering and existential discomfort and help them solid and constructive agreements that take into account the needs of each of them and their children.

The family mediator, taking charge of the emotional and relational aspects of the couple, will help couple to communicate well in order to overcome the anger, disappointment and resentment that are often present in separating or divorcing couples, so that, without quarrelling, they can quickly recover their decision-making power and shared educational values. In this way, the couple, with the help of the mediator, has the opportunity to address the most burning and difficult issues that create anxiety, tension and aggression in them, such as economic problems and educational and management choices that arise during the separation.

During family mediation, it is also possible to deal with other issues such as the relationship with grandparents, family network, holiday management, leisure time, etc. The

family mediator must do all this without the need for a mediator. All this is to be carried out by the family mediator without the need for a family mediator.

and with the guarantee of absolute impartiality and confidentiality. This intervention is time-limited: ten meetings, each lasting a maximum of two to two and a half hours, are often sufficient.

Since this service is activated when the spouses have already decided to separate or have separated, it does not have as its specific aim the reunification of the two partners. Therefore, it is not couple therapy and it is not family therapy. Any couple or family therapy may provide, accompany or follow mediation.

Family mediation is not a form of legal aid. It remains the domain of the lawyers who, as a rule, will intervene after mediation on issues relating to the separation procedure or the economic and marital aspects that the couple has decided to implement. Family mediation is also not technical advice for judges. Therefore, the mediator will not provide any kind of information to magistrates, lawyers or other persons without first obtaining the consent of the parties concerned.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ackerman N.W. (1968), *Psychodynamics of family life*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri.

Ajuriaguerra J. (1993), *Handbook of child psychiatry*, Milan, Masson.

Ajuriaguerra J., De and Marcelli D. (1986), *Psychopathology of the child*, Milan, Masson Italia Publishers.

Allen C.T., Swan S.C., Raghavan C. (2009), 'Gender Symmetry, Sexism, and Intimate Partner Violence', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 24, No. 11, pp. 1816 -1834.

Alvarez Deca J. (2009), *La violencia en la pareja: bidireccional y simétrica*, Madrid, Ed. AEMA.

Amato P. R. (2000), 'The consequences of divorce for adults and children', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, pp. 1269-1287.

Amato P. R., Keith B. (1991), 'Parental divorce and the well being of children.' *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, p. 26-46.

Ancona L. (2002), 'Family life: containing fears and the roots of hope', *Consultori Familiari Oggi*, 3 - 4.

Andolfi M. (2003), *Handbook of relational psychology. La dimensione familiare*, Rome, A.P.F.

Andolfi M. (2003), *The family of origin in therapy*. In Andolfi, M. and Cigoli, V. (eds.), *La famiglia d'origine*, Milan, Franco Angeli.

Andolfi M. a cura di, (1988), *La famiglia trigenerazionale*, Roma, Bulzoni.

Andolfi M., Angelo C. (1987), *Tempo e mito nella psicoterapia familiare*, Turin, Bollati.

Andreoli V. (1995), *La violenza*, Milan, RCS.

Anolli L. (2002), *Psychology of Communication*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Arieti S. (1970), *Manual of Psychiatry*, Turin, Boringhieri.

Ahrons C. (1981), 'The continuing coparental relationship between divorced spouses', *American Journal Orthopsychiatry*, 51, pp. 415 - 528.

Barberi M., (2016), 'Conflicts without violence', *Mind and Brain*, no. 135, March.

Bèque L. (2014), 'From cruelty to violence', *Mind and Brain*, no. 113, May p, 89.

Badolato G. (1993), *Paternal identity and couple relationships. Transformation of parental roles*. Milan, Giuffrè.

Barone L., Bacchini D. (2009), *Le emozioni nello sviluppo relazionale e morale*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Bateson G. (1984), *Mind and Nature*, Milan, Adelphi.

Berne E. (1971), *Transactional Analysis and Psychotherapy*,

Rome, Astrolabium.

Binda W. (1999), *Dalla diade coniugale alla triade familiare*, in Scabini E. (ed.), *L'Organizzazione famiglia tra crisi e sviluppo*, Milan, Franco Angeli.

Di Maria F., Formica I, (2006), *Contemporary Psychology*, 197, September - October.

Blair C., (2013), 'Danger Stress', *Mind and Brain*, no. 105, September.

Blosnich J.R., Bossarte R.M., (2009), 'Comparisons of Intimate Partner Violence Among Partners in Same Sex and Opposite Sex Relationships in the United States', *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 99, No. 12, pp. 2182 - 2184.

Bodenmann G. (1995a), 'The Influence of Stress and Coping on Marital Quality and Stability: A two-year Longitudinal Study', *Scientific Report*, 23, Fribourg, University of Fribourg.

Bollea G., (1985), 'Aggression in the age of development', *Federazione medica*, XXXVIII - 3.

Bonanate M. 'Grandmothers speak to women today', *Madre*, November 2011, p. 47.

Bonino S., (2012), 'The absurdity of physical punishment: I hit you to teach you not to hit', *Contemporary Psychology*, January-February.

Booth A., Amato P. R. (2001), 'Parental pre-divorce relations and offspring post-divorce wellbeing', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63, pp. 197 - 212.

Boszormenyi-Nagy I, Spark G.M., (1988). *Invisible loyalties. Reciprocity in intergenerational family therapy*, Rome, Astrolabium.

Bowen M., (1979), *From the family to the individual. The differentiation of the self in the family system*, Rome, Astrolabium.

Bowlby J. (1972), *Attachment and Loss, vol. 1, The Attachment to the Mother*, Turin, Boringhieri.

Bowlby J. (1975), *Attachment and Loss, vol. 2, The Separation from the Mother*, Turin, Boringhieri.

Bowlby J. (1982), *Construction and Breakdown of Affective Bonds*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Buchanan C.M., Heiges K.L. (2001), 'When conflict continues after the marriage ends: effects of post-divorce conflict on children', in J. Grych and F. Fincham (Eds.), *Interparental conflict and child development: theory, research and application*, Cambridge, England, *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 337-362.

Cardinali F., (2003), 'The genogram. How to represent a family history graphically'. In Andolfi M. and Cigoli V. (eds.), *La famiglia d'origine*, Milan, Franco Angeli.

Carney M., Buttell F., Dutton D., (2007), 'Women who experience intimate partner violence: A review of the literature with recommendations for treatment', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, January - February, pp. 108-115.

Chang D.F., Shen B.J., Takeuchi D.T., (2009), 'Prevalence and demographic correlates of intimate partner violence in Asian

Americans', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, Vol. 32, Issue 3, pp. 167-175.

Cristiani C. (2002), 'Old and new dynamics', *Famiglia oggi*, 11.

Cui M., Conger R. D., Lorenz F. O. (2005), 'Predicting change in adolescent adjustment from change in marital problems', *Developmental Psychology*, 5, pp. 812 - 823.

Dacquino G., (1994), *Che cos'è l'amore*, Milan, Mondadori Editore.

Davies P. T., Cummings E. M. (1994), 'Marital conflict and child adjustment: an emotional security hypothesis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 16, pp. 387 - 411.

Davies P. T., Lindsay L. L. (2001), *Does gender moderate the effects of marital conflict on children?* in J. H. Grych and F. D. Fincham (Eds.), *Interparental conflict and child development: theory, research and application*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, pp. 64-97.

De Ajuriaguerra J. (1993), *Handbook of child psychiatry*, Milan, Masson.

Dennet H. (1977), *Psychology of Women*, Turin, Boringhieri.

Di Maria F., Formica I, (2006), *Contemporary Psychology*, 197, September - October.

Di Nuovo S. (2008), 'Separation and shared custody of children', *Contemporary Psychology*, 206, March - April.

Dollard J, (1998), *Frustration and aggression*, London, Routledge.

- Dolto F. (2009), *When parents separate*, Milan, Mondadori.
- Donati P. (2000), "Ripensare i servizi di Welfare alla luce di un nuovo concetto di Benessere familiare", *Consultori Familiari Oggi, Atti del XII Convegno Nazionale*, Alghero.
- Emery R. E. (1982), 'Interparental conflict and the children of discord and divorce', *Psychological Bulletin*, 92, pp. 310 - 330.
- Emery R. E., Fincham F. D., Cummings E. M. (1992), 'Parenting in context: systemic thinking about parental conflict and its influence on children', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 60, pp. 909 - 912.
- Epstein N. B., Bishop D. S., Levin S. (1978), 'The McMaster model of family functioning', *Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling*, 4, pp. 19 - 31.
- Felson R.B., (2002). 'Violence and gender reexamined', *Law and Public Policy: Psychology and the Social Sciences Series*, American Psychological Association, April.
- Fenichel O. (1951), *Treatise on Psychoanalysis*, Rome, Astrolabio.
- Ferruccio A. (1990), *Psychology of couples and families*, Rome, Edizioni Mediterranee.
- Flynn C.P., (1990), 'Relationship violence by women: issues and implications', *Family Relations*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Apr. pp. 194 -198.

Fiebert M.S., Gonzales D.M., (1997), 'Women who initiate assaults and their male partners and the reasons offered for such behaviour', *Psychological Reports*, 80, pp. 583 - 590.

Fincham F. D. (2003), 'Marital conflict: correlates, structure and context', *Current Direction in Psychological Science*, 12, pp. 23 - 27.

Framo J. L. (1996), *Intergenerational therapy*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina.

Framo J. L. (2012), 'The family of origin as a therapeutic resource', *Family Therapy*, Vol.100, pp. 41-67.

Francescato D., Ercolani A. P. (1994), 'Psychological functioning of children of united and separated families', *Developmental Age*, 47, pp. 5 -13.

Galimberti U. (2006), *Dictionary of Psychology*, Rome, Gruppo editoriale L'Espresso.

Galli Della Loggia E., (2011), "Se la televisione si sostituisce alla élite. Come cambia l'antropologia italiana", *Corriere della sera*, 20 February.

Gillini G., Zattoni M. (1994), *Ben-essere in famiglia*, Brescia, Editrice Gueriniana.

Giordano P.C., Millhollin T.J., Cernkovich S.A., Pugh M.D., Rudolph J.L., (1999), 'Delinquency, identity, and women's involvement in relationship violence', *Criminology*, Vol. 37(1), February, pp.17-40.

Gordis E. B., Margolin G., John R. S. (1997), 'Marital aggres-

sion, observed parental hostility, and child behaviour during

triadic family interaction', *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11 (1), pp. 76-89.

Greenspa S., Lieff Benderly B. (1988), *The Intelligence of the Heart*, Milan, Mondadori.

Greenspan S.I. (1999), *Psychotherapy and psychological development*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Guèguen N. (2009), 'Arithmetic of the Couple', *Mind and Brain*, No. 53, May, p. 98.

Gurman A. S., Kniskern D.P., (1995), *Handbook of family therapy*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri.

Hacker F., (1971), *Aggressiveness and violence in the modern world*, Edizioni il Formichiere, Milan.

Harding E. (1951), *The Woman's Way*, Rome, Astrolabe.

Hines D.A., Malley Morrison K., (2001), 'Psychological effects of partner abuse against men: a neglected research area', *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, Vol. 2, No. 2, July, pp. 75- 85.

Hofmann A. (2015), "Do I forgive you or not?" "*Mind and Brain*, no. 131, November, p. 99.

Iafrate R. (1996), 'Communication, satisfaction and parental influence in intact and separated families with adolescent children', *Archives of Psychology, Neurology and Psychiatry*, 23, pp. 175- 193.

Jacobson E. (1977), 'Problem solving and Contingency Contracting in the Treatment of Marital Discord', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 45, pp. 92-100.

Karney B. R., Bradbury T. N. (1995), 'The Longitudinal Course of Marital Quality and Stability: A Review of Theory, Method and Research', *Psychological Bulletin*, 118, pp.3-34.

Kerig P. K. (1995), 'Triangles in the family circle: effects of family structure on marriage, parenting and child adjustment', *Journal of Family Psychology*, 9 (1), pp. 28-43.

Kerig P. K. (1998), 'Moderators and mediators of the effects of interparental conflict on children's adjustment', *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 26 (3), pp. 199-212.

Kitzmann K. M. (2000), 'Effects of marital conflict on subsequent triadic family interactions and parenting', *Developmental Psychology*, 36, pp. 3-13.

LeJeune C., Follette V. (1994), 'Taking responsibility. Sex differences in reporting dating violence', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 9, No. 1, March, pp. 133-140.

Le Van C., Le Gall D. (2011), 'The faces of marital infidelity', *Contemporary Psychology*, September-October p. 30.

Lidz T. (1977), *Family and problems of adaptation*, Turin, Boringhieri

Lombardo, P. (1997), *Educare ai valori*, Verona, Edizioni Vita Nuova.

Lorenz K. (1997), I would like to become a goose. L'autobiografia e la conferenza del Nobel, (edited by) Elena and Enrico Alleva, Padova, Franco Muzzio Editore.

Loretto L. et al., (2004), 'hound', *Quaderni italiani di psichiatria*, XXIII, 62- 68.

Losacco V. L. (2010), 'Couple crises, their origin and consequences', *Previdenza*, 9, p. 34.

Luban Plozza B., Ritschl D. (1991), *Familial Conflict Dynamics*, Rome, Armando Editore.

Macchietto J., (1992), 'Aspects of male victimization and female aggression: implications for counselling men', *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, Vol. 14, No. 3, July, pp. 375-392.

Maccoby E. E., Buchanan C. M., Mnookin R. H., Dornbusch S. M. (1993), Postdivorce roles of mothers and fathers in the lives of their children *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7, pp. 24-38.

Macrì P. G. et al., (2012), 'Survey on violence against men', *Journal of Criminology, Victimology and Security*, Vol. VI - No. 3 - September-December 32, p. 30.

Magna P. (2004) 'In search of a reconciled man-woman and husband-wife relationship' *Thirteen Dimensions*, 1, 59-76

Malagoli Togliatti M., Telfener U. (1991), *Dall'individuo al sistema. Manuale di psicopatologia relazionale*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri.

Martinez J., Cortes E. (1998), 'The complex relationship between family and culture', *La Famiglia*, year 32, March-April.

Mazzei, D. (2002), *Family Mediation*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina Editore,

Mereloo J.A.M., (1968), 'La violence humaine opposée à l'agressivité animale', *Med et Hyg.*, 821, 457- 462.

McLeod M., (1984), 'Women against man: An examination of domestic violence based on an analysis of official data and national victimization data', *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 1(2), pp. 171-193.

McNeely R.L., Cook P.W., Torres J.B., (2001), "Is domestic violence a gender issue or a human issue?" *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, Vol. 4, pp. 227-251.

McNelly R.L., RobinsonSimpson G., (1987), 'The truth about domestic violence: a falsely framed issue', *Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 6, Nov. Dec. pp. 485-490.

Meazzini P. (2006), *L'ira di Achille, come dominare la collera, quando è necessario*, Milano, Giunti.

Meltzer D., Harris M. (1983), *The educational role of the family*, Turin, Centro Scientifico.

Miller J. G. (1978), *The general history of living systems*, Milano, Franco Angeli.

Minuchin S., (1976), *Families and family therapy*, Rome, Astrolabio Ubaldini.

Morandi F. (1994), 'L'identità del femminile: per una nuova storia della donna', *La famiglia*, year XXVIII, May-June, p.23.

- Moruzzi G. (1975), *Physiology of Relational Life*, Turin, UTET.
- Mullet E. (2015), 'Revenge' *Mind and Brain*, no. 126, June.
- Nicholls T.L., Dutton D.G., (2001), 'Abuse committed by women against male intimates', *Journal of Couples Therapy*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 41-57.
- Nicholls, T.L., and Hamel, J., (2007), *Family interventions in domestic violence: a handbook of gender-inclusive theory and treatment*, New York, Springer Pub.
- Paradis A. D., et al., (2009), 'Long-term impact of family arguments and physical violence on adult functioning at age 30 years: Findings from the Simmons longitudinal study', *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 48 (3), 290-298.
- Pasini W. (1993), *Volersi bene, volersi male*, Milan, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore.
- Perretti M., (1977), 'The unity of the family', *La Famiglia*, May - June.
- Picozzi M., (2012), 'Mind and Brain', No 90, June, p. 29.
- Pirrone, C., (2014), 'How to say: I promise to be faithful always', *Family Today*, No. 3, p. 54-55.
- Ridley C.A., Feldman C.M., (2003), 'Female domestic violence forward male partners: Exploring conflict responses and outcomes', *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 157-170.

Roberto R., (2016), 'Intrafamilial violence', *The Family Consultant*, April - June.

Romano M. C., Sabbadini L. (2005), 'The times of daily life', *Famiglia oggi*, 8-9.

Rosenfeld R., (1997), 'Changing relationships between men and women. A note on the decline in intimate partner violence', *Homicide Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, February, pp. 72-83.

Rossi M. (1988), *Myths and family culture*. In Andolfi M., (ed.), *La famiglia trigenerazionale*, Rome, Bulzoni.

Roxane, R., *et al.*, (2011), 'Disparity and Disasters: A Front-line View of Gender-Based Inequities in Emergency Aid and Health Care', *Anthropology at the Front Lines of Gender-Based Violence*, Vanderbilt University Press.

Sarchielli, G., (2010), 'Becoming superwoman- A social trap', *Contemporary Psychology*, September-October.

Scaparro F., Bernardini I., (1987), "Come ridurre i traumi della separazione", *Famiglia Oggi*, September-October, year X, n.29.

Sigler, R.T. (1989), *Domestic violence in context: an assessment of community attitudes*, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.

Slade A. (2010), *Parental relationship and reflexive function*, Rome, Astrolabe.

Slepoj V. (2005), *The Wounds of Men*, Milan, Arnaldo Mondadori Editore.

Smelser

- Spiegel R. (1970), *Communication in psychiatric disorders*, in Arieti S., *Handbook of Psychiatry*, Turin, Boringhieri.
- Spock B., (1969), *Il dottor Spock parla agli adulti*, Milan, Longanesi and C..
- Stefani J. (2006), 'Women at the helm', *Contemporary Psychology*, 195.
- Straus, M. A. (2005), 'Women's violence towards men is a serious social problem', *Current controversies on family violence*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications.
- Sullivan H.S. (1962), *Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, Milan, Feltrinelli Editore.
- Tangs C.S., (1999), 'Marital power and aggression in a community sample of Hong Kong Chinese families', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 14, No. 6, June, pp. 5-86
- Moriconi M. (2011), 'The genetic side of aggression', *Men and Brain*, no. 74, February.
- Tribulato E. (2005), *L'educazione negata*, Messina, EDAS.
- Volpi R. (2007), *La fine della famiglia*, Mondatori, Milan.
- Von Bertalanffy L. (1971). *General systems theory. Fundamentals, development, applications*. Milan, ILI.
- Watzlawick P., Beavin J. D., Jackson D. (1971), *Pragmatics of Human Communication. A study of interactive patterns, pathologies and paradoxes*, Rome, Astrolabium.
- Wolff S. (1970), *Fears and conflicts in childhood*, Rome, Armando Armando Editore.

THANKS

My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Giacomo Longo, who, with great expertise and willingness, agreed to revise these pages and provided us with many valuable tips and suggestions to make the text clearer and more readable.