

**Marek Liciński**  
**Psychoprophylactic Society**

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **Introduction**

If I see a sinister fellow in a dark alley snatching an old lady's handbag or when an adult man tortures a baby because it is crying, I have no difficulty to distinguish who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. If I have to deal with the conflicts of adults who have lived together for a number of years and are engaged in a domestic conflict with often brutal methods, I usually have many doubts about who is to blame. It is also clear to me that physical violence is inadmissible because of the unpredictable and sometimes irreversible effects. Moreover, it is impossible to work with a couple in which either party is intimidated.

For 40 years I have been a family therapist. During this time I have worked directly and indirectly with hundreds of families. Most were families, from the margins of society, in which dramatic forms of mutual fighting were common. I also worked with the families of psychotic patients, where specific problems arise from deception and lack of direct communication. A large group were families of children with problems in adolescence (disruptive behaviour, substance abuse). Finally, seemingly well-functioning families, struggling with difficulties in communication, or those where the adults were fighting for dominance and to prove, whose on top. In all of these families it would be very difficult for me to determine who is to blame. The closer I came to getting to know and understand each of them, the more it was clear to me that everyone has their own reasons and everyone has their own fighting techniques. Of course, this does not mean that participation in the growing problems of the couple was always symmetrical but was usually very difficult to quantify and are not necessarily helpful in the solution. It seems to me that the real causes of conflicts within couples lie in the patterns of behaviour emerging from our home, especially the experience of early childhood, mutual expectations at the outset, its history, the course of domestic conflict and the ways of solving them. The decisive role is a lack of preparedness and inability to communicate and trust in the partner which are also often drawn from our home. So I am extremely wary as to the use of the categories of perpetrator and victim together in helping reach an agreement, but I do not feel empowered or competent in the judgment of their guilt. Nor do I believe that this may be helpful in the efficient work with the couple. I would like to present my understanding of the causes of conflicts in couples and my experience working with couples who did not cope with their solutions. Since the topic seems to be difficult and complex I will confine the discussion to adult violence towards each other, putting aside the problem of violence against children for later.

### **Early causes of conflicts in couples**

Over the past 100-150 years the real functions of the family and the relationship between its members have changed radically. Family life has ceased to be a form of protection enabling the biological survival of its members, especially the old, women and children. Outside the family they did not have any undue chances of survival. Today, the family meets rather only the psychological needs, especially emotional. So it does not require absolute loyalty, compliance, and a careful division of roles. Today there are many social institutions which guarantee the basic needs of the weak: children, the poor, the sick, old and lonely. Once, due to the much shorter life span the family only lasted twenty years, and rarely was 3-generational. Today, it can often last 50-60 years, and is usually 3 to 4 generations. Historically, in many respects a woman was dependent on a man. He often had at his

disposition common ownership, was better educated, had a clear social status, etc. Today, women have the same rights as men, more frequently on a par in terms of education, income, social position, but if they want can completely control the procreation deciding on the status and situation of the family.

Children are brought up not by giving them guidance and preaching. Living with us every day they take from us the examples and somehow "soak" us up. Unfortunately they take all of our features: and the good and bad, and the clear and the unconscious. If you believe the results of modern psychoneurological research particular importance in shaping the character of the child are the earliest years. Then more and more important becomes his own experience, in which we are indeed still playing a vital role. Thus this cultural heritage we pass on to future generations especially in their early childhood. Before in our own adult life and experience we are able to verify appropriately our parents' patterns of behaviours and values provided to us. When we reach about fifty we begin to understand the world around us and the regularity that governs it, that's when our twenty something year old children program our grandchildren. Unfortunately, they unwittingly transmit patterns of behaviour and images, which in early childhood, they equally unconsciously took from us. The mechanism of this transfer ensures its continuity, but prevents rapid adaptation to modern realities. Verification of these patterns of behaviour occur with a delay of several generations causing in our often unconscious expectations of ourselves and others many contradictions and misunderstandings. Women would also like to have an equal right to a career, independence, influence and equal participation in the estate and at the same time care, protection, and special treatment. Men want to dominate, decide, to be independent and free from household duties and also expect the right to make mistakes, rest, weakness, assistance, care and understanding. Woman look for a partner who makes a career, is enterprising, earns lots of money but also wants to be a home lover, who likes to do the washing, cleans, changes the children and listens. A man at the same time looks for an attractive and elegant woman to take to parties, active and open in sex and also a great cook, economical and an industrious housewife, a loving mother during illness and the unconditional acceptance of himself as a partner, and somehow sees no difficulty in combining these roles.

Even more contradictions arise from the individual experience of the partners in their original families. For a woman the first role model of a man is usually the father, especially when he is to a large extent involved in her upbringing. Similarly, for a male the archetype of a woman is his mother. The experience of these children is both different hopes and expectations and fears and resentments. Of significance here is not only the relationships with their parents but also the relationships between the parents. Important is also the dynamics of these relationships, their gradual evolution and ultimate finale. In many families, patterns of behaviour transferred to the children are destructive. They are based primarily on lies, manipulation, domination, games and violence. This is all shaping the subsequent expectations of the child towards their partner and their family. Early childhood experiences are often decisive in forming the child's character though we usually are unable to remember them. Some of our memories of early childhood come rather from the later, not necessarily reliable information from parents. That's why most adults are unaware of early childhood conditions. They also try to reconcile conflicting expectations. In their own relationships they often unconsciously repeat patterns taken from their home, even though many times they promised that with their families it will be completely different. This applies not just to the treatment of the partner, but also to the bringing up of children. A woman brought up by a dominant mother, when choosing partner may unconsciously look for someone who will be in love with her, who will care more than her, who will have a tendency to succumb to her. Then she will feel attractive, worthwhile and important and thanks to the dominance safe. Then she will not think about the fact that he does not offer support, and with time will cease to respect him. A man raised by an overprotective mother may unconsciously look for a partner who will be energetic, determined, resourceful, focused on him, caring. He does not see that she makes him dependent on her, limits his independence, imposes her will, is treated often as a child. Of course, the examples are simplified. Real relationships are usually more complex and harder to recognize.

Another factor increasing the risk of rising grievances and conflicts in a relationship is how partners present themselves in the beginning. Usually they try to hide what they consider to be their flaws and expose what they regard as their strengths. They try to guess and meet the expectations of their partner, even if they are not ready to meet them in the future. They do not realize that in this way they make completely unrealistic expectations of themselves incurring debts which are impossible to pay. Such a procedure makes it virtually impossible to make a real choice based on shared goals or values, interests, lifestyles and acceptance of mutual constraints and differences. This guarantees being letdown, disappointment and permanent conflict in the relationship. Often appearances are kept up for a few years and are brought to light by serious problems associated with the advent of children, financial problems, infidelity, etc. The late onset of appearances and contradictions (e.g. where there are already children) makes it difficult or impossible to resolve them constructively. It is usually accompanied by a sense of hurt and grief and persistent undermining of confidence. This is often the beginning of a deeper conflict and domestic turmoil.

All of these burdens and contradictions taken from the home would not have such serious consequences, if the partners trusted each other, were open to each other and sought agreement even on basic issues. The problem is do they want to and can they. In this respect, the patterns of behaviour taken from the home are critical. Unfortunately it is very popular today to expose your strengths and hide your flaws in both your private, social and professional life. The most important thing is to make a good impression and not alienate anyone. Maybe it facilitates everyday life but it prevents recognition and understanding of many fundamental differences and disagreements between partners. Many young people, when starting their own family are guided more by dreams than reality. They prefer to believe that somehow it will be alright than to take responsibility for the gradual building of a real community. They often avoid confrontation with reality and difficult problems leaving them to be dealt with later. They can not recognize their feelings and all the more so openly talk about them with their partner. Often the differences and contradictions are treated by the young as a question of honour and provoke more the game about who is right, who will impose their views on someone else than to seek a compromise and agreement. They are not prepared for this neither in the family home nor at school. Textbooks teaching about living in the family present an archaic, superficial vision of the family based on "traditional" ritualized roles and do not prepare for the partnership, open communication and the search for compromises and the real extent of the community.

### **Domestic conflicts**

At least half of the couples I worked with decided to be together with each other because of love. Without going too much into what it meant to them then, it is moving that it so often ended up with deep regret and anger on both sides, dramatic, destroying everything in the struggle between them and finally separation. It seems to me that in addition to their burdens taken from home much bad had happened in their relationship due to lack of open communication and not seeking a consensus.

The first cause of confusion is that when problems and difficulties arise the partners often feel that they are against each other, treat them as a grievance and not a problem to solve. Rather, they are focused on explaining and justifying themselves and not to listening and understanding their partner. In practice, focusing on defending their own reasons preclude the search for solutions. If I can explain to myself this problem, at least in my opinion, it ceases to exist. While on the other side is a sense of regret and incomprehension. The same is with competitions playing on ambitions as to "whose on top". Whether a partner has yielded or not is to be a sign of his love, about whether he really cares or not. It is also often taken as proof of the attractiveness and importance to the partner. One can thus boost your self esteem by first having a partner, then by gradually imposing your own will, finally rejecting and humiliating the partner who demonstrate their commitment by tolerating such treatment. It is rather a pyrrhic victory, because the price is the feeling of hurt and grief of the victim and the gradual loss of his affections. This game often provokes the anti play "who cares less." If my

commitment is turned against me and is used primarily to satisfy his vanity, the only defense is indifference, even pretended. This often ends in separation. Both of these games, quite common, permanently undermine the mutual trust between the partners, discourage openness and urge to seek consensus and provoke us to play. This is often the first form of domestic conflict. The war for dominance.

The next steps in the rise of the crisis in a relationship result primarily from a confrontation of initial declarations and obligations with everyday reality. As I said, young people presenting themselves at the beginning in the most favourable light possible, incur liabilities, which they later find difficult to keep. It is increasingly difficult for such gestures as flowers, candlelight dinners, the showing of sensitivity every day. Of course, much disappointment and disenchantment is also due to the previously discussed internally contradictory and unrealistic expectations emerging from the home. Particularly difficult trials are gone through by couples in connection with the basic choices regarding children, jobs, income, housing, relationships with parents, etc. Consider, for example, a couple who decides to quickly have two children. At the beginning the children are taken care of by her staying at home and putting her professional career on hold till later. On the other hand he has to concentrate on work, career, earnings to allow them their own home. Such couple are prone to many lurking dangers verifying their mutual affection. In the beginning, when she is pregnant she has a lot of his care and attention. She is free from many household duties. Their home is visited by many guests, friends, family. She is the center of attention. Less and less looking for closer contact with him. He sometimes feels marginalized. The situation is getting worse after the birth. She focuses on the child, on the guests, on her parents, who frequently visit their home very often to help deal with the child. In time, he feels completely disregarded. The early period of motherhood is a difficult time for women and for their relationship. It carries many temptations for women and she often loses touch with reality. The love of a young child is very attractive. The baby is so close, open, committed, safe. Only a small child loves unconditionally. A partner is loved in many ways. When he comes back tired from work all she wants is help at home, talking only about the child and parents. In such a situation he could easily feel used and rejected. He turns away from his family and commits himself more at work. Increasingly, he returns home late. Increasingly, goes on business trips. He comes back tired, cold, watches TV. Avoids close contact. She did not care too much about herself during pregnancy and lactation. Neglected, she put on weight. She realizes that he works surrounded by young, attractive, ambitious girls for whom he is certainly an attractive guy with a future. She feels tied to the home, financially dependent on him, alone, without specific perspectives. She is afraid that she has already lost him, that he already has another. They start to resent each other, the scenes of jealousy, guilt complexes, turning their parents on each other, etc. These scenarios of mutual disappointment are endless. A woman who has a relationship with a dependent, submissive, insecure partner is after a while impatient of his passivity and playing it safe, unable to count on him, lack of support. The man, who unwittingly looked for his partner to be attentive, caring and a totally accepting mother is disappointed that she begins to demand clear conditions and requirements and is tired of his selfishness. She does not want to live for him any longer.

The mutual disappointment and loss of confidence form a sense of injustice. Each partner feels cheated and exploited. It is easy to put things out of proportion. Each partner justifies their errors and omissions and exaggerates their partner's errors. Using games and manipulation, distrust and suspicion triggers premeditation and malice with a partner. And that provokes to settle scores. This is where the real fight begins. Everyone has their reasons, and everyone has their own methods of fighting. It seems to me that in the family between adults full of resentment but also strongly associated with each other there are no vulnerable people. In the battle there can be used an almost unlimited arsenal of methods and means by which to harass each other's daily life. I will mention only the most popular. You can shirk household duties, taking care of children, participating in the cost of living. You can lie and manipulate, you can seduce and deny, create different coalitions within and outside the family, scheme and turn family members against one and other, conspire against each other, win over children, isolate the partner from contact with children. You can turn against

someone distant relatives, friends, and finally various services, fabricating accusations. You can oppress unfair criticism and judgments. You can assign him despicable motives and intentions, arouse in him feelings of guilt. This is a particularly insidious and cruel weapon, especially against someone who is susceptible to it. Someone can demonstratively show indifference, contempt and scorn. You can reject him, show him disgust, revulsion. Humiliate, ridicule in front of the children, family, neighbours. For any reason you can start a brawl, scream, intimidate, threaten, etc., etc. You can therefore destroy a partner, keep them in a state of permanent stress, in despair without even touching them. In this way you can cause serious illness in relatives, mental collapse or torment them to death. With this in mind, the use of physical violence, beyond the extreme forms, is not necessarily more dangerous and more destructive. You can also deliberately provoke physical violence from a partner to be able to pass as his victim. You can of course remain in the shadows, commission a beating by a stranger, friend or extended family members. The status of such forms of struggle is not clear for me, when eviction is provoked, partner being sent to prison or a psychiatric institution on the basis of fabricated charges (such as the mistreatment of family members or, very popular today, child abuse). In most families, with whom I worked, if there was physical violence it was by both sides. Many people who resort to physical violence are the weakest people in the family. The outbreak of violence is often brought about by despair, extreme feeling of hurt and helplessness. Another problem falsifying the picture of domestic violence is who is actually physically beaten and humiliated and who is lodging a formal complaint of having been beaten. A significant proportion of people who have been beaten never complain because they are ashamed. Meanwhile, many people make false accusations of physical abuse by a partner as part of the game they are playing with him or to get rid of them.

## **Addiction**

I do not think of addiction as a illness. It is rather a stupid and destructive way of temporarily separating yourself from your problems. This is a bad choice, which can be changed at any time. Treating addiction as a illness facilitates the justification of these choices and avoids responsibility for their consequences, both for the addict and his surroundings.

For forty years I have been trying to help addicts. Most of my patients coped with their often dramatic, problems with addiction. I also have behind me my own addiction at the beginning of my adult life. It seems to me that the deep dependence is gone through mainly by people who have very serious problems with the assessment of themselves and do not have anyone really close, who understands and supports them without any opportunism. Problems with self assessment may result from what we take from home convinced that we are worse than others, that we are good for nothing, have no influence on anything and that you can not believe anyone. These problems can also result from the rejection by parents or partner and the belief that one is not worthy of love and elementary respect. They can also result from inadequate aspiration and the belief that attention and recognition can be achieved only if you turn out to be unique and better than others. A great deal of attention and effort is devoted to separating drug addicts from the painful and unacceptable reality (e.g. I am worse than others, nobody loves me nor understands me, I am average and ordinary like others), and pretending to be someone they would like to pass as. Boys smoking pot in the stairwell or guys drinking another beer at the shop talk about what would happen if, what they will achieve in the future, and "I will show them", etc. Nobody listens, each babbles on spinning his tale, in which he is somebody better than he really is. All have a false sense of community and mutual understanding. The girl who sells her body, spends her money drinking in a bar, ordering expensive dishes, giving large tips, buying people she just met drinks and pretending to be a successful lady. An ambitious guy gets drunk at a party, accosting everyone, boasts and pretends to be someone important promising made up things. Alcohol not only allows you not to think about your problems and hang ups, but also improves mood, lowers self-criticism, increases self-confidence.

A common feature of many people becoming addicted is how easy life is in their imagination. Often the line between what is real and what is fiction becomes blurred. You can imagine and explain everything. This ease arises when parents feed the child's ambitions and imagination. Or if they live in a very poor environment, where little depends on them. Even when they are tightly controlled, criticized while doing things for them. They can do little and not much is asked of them. Then imagination is his main area of autonomy and efficacy. Addictive is, above all, that what in the real world is difficult, expensive, requires much effort and although it frequently is not successful, in the imagination it is possible, simple and easy. The essence of this way of coping is a lie and a simulation. Some people are capable of fleeing from reality while sober, others need stimulants. Some addicts are not looking for compensation, do not create the appearance that they are better. These are people who are not able to endure their situation (e.g. rejection), they do not see a solution or the ability to be free from suffering. Then the anesthetic is taking hard drugs or getting drunk senseless.

There are many ways to escape from the harsh reality both external and internal, and many forms of compensation. The oldest and simplest, commonly used is a lie and creation of appearances. Once a popular means of breaking with the daily routine was to read romance novels or murder mysteries, which allowed one to follow the life of another, better life without the specific risk and effort. Today, these functions are fulfilled by television and especially serials and soap operas. Women from many families of the margins of society, with whom we work, sit all day watching TV, and are familiar with the details of all episodes of popular series. Their knowledge of the subject is impressive. Enormous opportunities to escape and compensation provide a virtual space. You can with impunity for hours surf the internet pretending to be whoever you want, at least until someone gets it in their head to meet in real life. You can play computer games while living in different worlds and safely live virtual experiences and success. There probably are many other forms of separation and compensation, which may be addictive. The decisive factor here is their function in the life of the particular person and not the nature of these activities.

Most people deeply addicted suffer not just mentally but also physically. They are usually people who for many years have been living under stress, poorly nourished, sick, suffering from many ailments. Alcohol and drugs anaesthetise not only their souls but also their sick body by lowering the sensitivity of the nervous system. When the person is sober their sensitivity does not return to normal levels but remains significantly elevated. Added to this is the onerous withdrawal reaction, dehydration and other severe pains felt in an excruciating way. It is difficult to bear and often leads to the addict anaesthetising himself again. When someone wants to stop drinking or getting stoned this lasts several days. The real problems begin after a few weeks, when they have really sobered up and are able to realistically look at their situation. Then it turns out, that if you really want to break with drink or drugs and everything associated with them, you find yourself alone in a total void, with no purpose, no buddies, no resources, often without the range of skills necessary for normal life. You are surrounded by a tight circle of creditors who you have let down, hurt, cheated, who look suspiciously on his actions and demand for him to suffer the consequences, reimbursement, restitution, reparation, etc. This is a family, abused partners, deceived friends, dealer debts, service workers, police, court, etc. Usually, he realizes that if he works hard on himself then maybe in five years he will catch up with the back of the pack. This perspective seems to him to be very remote, difficult and doubtful and practically unattainable. And what is the alternative? A quick, easy and really cheap return to drink or drugs. He knows that it does not lead anywhere but it is accessible, works immediately and releases from liability. This selection is the essence of addiction. It concerns not only drinking or getting stoned but also lies, pretending, avoiding responsibility, evasion of duties, etc. An absolute condition for effective change and to solve their problems is full awareness of the realities and their errors without any illusions and excuses. Abstinence includes not only drinking and getting stoned but also all forms of escape from harsh reality and the compensation is required if the addict is ready for a real confrontation with their problems.

Returning to the context of family conflict, substance abuse and violence are rather the result of increasing problems and the absence of agreement, rather than their cause. Of course, they deepen mutual conflict, bitterness and distrust, and it is very difficult to solve them. It seems to me that more prone to addiction are primarily the weaker ones in a relationship who lose the game, which care more about the relationship, who can not leave, who feel helpless. Thus they cut themselves off from reality and anaesthetize themselves via alcohol. Abuse of alcohol weakens the control of the drinker and promotes the use of violence by him. But just as often also provokes various forms of violence from the partner. It also seems to me deciding who's guilty and who is the victim is neither possible, nor is it helpful in solving the problem. The condition for a solution of the problem of violence and abuse in the family is mutual understanding, willingness to reach an agreement, kindness, tolerance and especially support in a crisis.

## **Aid**

The primary objective of family assistance, which resolves conflicts between themselves through mutual violence is for each of them to understand their motives and circumstances and the motives and circumstances of the partner. This allows to look at the conduct of the partner in term of patterns of behaviour and expectations emerging from the home, and mutual reactions and resentment arising in the course of their relationship. This helps to reduce mutual distrust, the inclusion of a partner's reasoning, without suspecting premeditation and malice, and recognize and appreciate their own sins in the escalation of conflict and confrontation. It allows better mutual understanding in order to search and learn agreement.

In order for these aims to be realized the couple must be ready to meet a number of conditions. First, it is possible if both parties still want to solve their mutual problems. Second, they must agree on, even temporarily, a cease-fire and in particular physical confrontation. Third, they must be interested in finding the causes of problems and conflicts not only with a partner but also with themselves. Finally, they must be ready to change their behaviour towards their partner and search for compromise and agreement.

Especially difficult is working with couples from marginalized communities. Usually, they are overwhelmed by the dramatic social problems, often demanding interim radical action. Most are dependent on the help of various social services, which often interfere with their marital conflicts arbitrarily pushing their solutions (e.g. conditioning assistance on obtaining a divorce). People from the margins of society have deeply rooted patterns of behaviour of destructive and confrontational forms of conflict resolution in the family. They are generally very wary even to their relatives and ready for a ruthless struggle. They generally have very low self-awareness and willingness to change. If only because they do not believe in themselves and their abilities. Most are very afraid of weakness and humiliation. They do not have the habit of asking or apologizing. Do not expect anything good from others. Therefore, they believe that they will have only as much as they manage to snatch, extort, manipulate. Between the partners there are at times significant differences in the ability of expression, capability and position in society, in practical life skills, and finally in the position in the family. So long introduction and preparation is necessary to even begin the process of marital therapy. Their basic social problems must be first solved, their faith in themselves restored and their causative abilities, break their distrust of others and offset serious differences between their capabilities.

I work with families in the tradition of individual work oriented on the family. This approach is particularly useful in working with families from the social margins. This usually means working in teams of therapists, continued in the long term in the form of individual contacts with each family member (couples). Only after extensive preparation (a year or two) are contacts with couples attempted. The individual work phase serves to solve basic social problems of the family, without which it is impossible to work on emotional and family

problems. It is also necessary to establish a closer contact in advance with each partner, and obtain their trust and confidence. Only then it is possible to study their own history, history of their relationship, interaction and motivation to change. Simultaneous work by the team with each of the partners enables on one hand knowledge and understanding of virtue and the point of view of each of them, on the other hand their interactions and it helps to find that what unites them. The condition to commence their joint work is to ensure in advance that each of them understands well himself and his functioning in this relationship and the functioning of the partner. Before this happens there can be no dialogue between them, much less agreement.

Most families who I have tried to help are families from the margins of society. Often an excuse to initiate contacts with the family were problems of their children in school. In making contact with them I never insisted on any preconditions. I declare unilateral assistance in caring for their children (e.g. in the day room) and help in solving social problems. Such proposals are normally approved by the family, because they are safe and comply with their expectations. At this stage, I just try to help in what family members are interested in. If possible, I pay particular attention to make them solve social problems together and not do it for them. I avoid arbitrariness, assessing and instructing. I try to show them respect, kindness and tolerance, treating them as partners, to understand their situation, "from their perspective". I leave them plenty of space for their own evaluations and decisions about how to resolve other problems, even if they are not very effective. It is important they do as many things as possible their way and only have themselves to thank. The mere accompaniment and support of them while they are experiencing difficulty and want to give up, is very helpful to them. Above all else I try to ensure that they will not give up, that they will accept the fact that not many things are successful initially, that they should try again and learn from their mistakes. I discuss with them what they did well and what they did not so well. Together, we are looking for errors and possible solutions for the future. Sometimes we practice them in role plays. The most important thing is for them to be able to see that gradually we are making progress, that they are more and more successful, and they owe it above all to themselves. That a temporary failure is not just another humiliation but also educational.

Supporting family members I try to be honest, open and authentic. I do not do anything contrary to them or behind their backs. I do not try to manipulate them nor press anything. I can tell them what I think about something, but they always choose, because they bear all the consequences of what they do, I almost never do. I never declare too much. During this time, warily watching me they assess the conformity of what I say to what I'm doing and how I feel. They check and test me on numerous occasions. If I'm honest, if I prove myself in difficult cases, if I am not naive and can not be used, I can gradually gain their trust and respect. It is my attitude to them, understanding, respect and partnership which also builds their self-esteem and self-respect. If I win their confidence if they feel that I understand them, if they feel safe with me, they usually begin to talk about their problems.

If I have to deal with the addict, who is degraded and is ignored by the family, has no influence on anything, I take strenuous efforts to get through to them and to have good contact. This is difficult in the beginning. The person avoids contact because they have learnt from unpleasant experiences to expect the attack, pressure, made to feel guilty, prejudice, etc. They are also the person who usually has the most difficult situation in the family and are the most motivated to change only they don't see any opportunities for themselves. If I can talk frankly with them, if only to convince them that I'm not against them, that I understand, most often they are willingly to accept assistance. Getting drunk and anesthetizing themselves, they are gradually killing themselves. Understanding and support restores their desire to live and hope to change their fate. As soon as they see a chance to make some changes in their relationship with their partner and position in the family they are ready to do a great deal. In families from the social margin in this situation are mostly men. If addiction has not gone too far, if there is no clear physical consequences, rehabilitation can usually be quite rapid. Often, such men have many strengths and potential. If he only has the desire to live again, he can without much difficulty find a job, take care of himself, gradually rebuild his reputation in the environment. After the rejection and many humiliations in his relationship, it is important for

him to feel physically attractive. It is crucial for him to recover his self-confidence and his abilities and hope for the successful relationship with his partner.

When partners resolve their major social problems and relatively stabilize their life situation, it is possible to start work on their relationship. At the beginning I meet with each family member individually analyzing their needs and problems with them. As a rule, each of them sees these things as the effects of the nature and conduct of their partner. During this time, I try to listen and understand each of them. This is a step for releasing resentments and grudges. When it peters out I usually suggest to look at his experience of the family of his origin. We analyze the relationship with their parents, learned patterns of behaviour and directives from home, the resulting ideas about love, partner, family, raising children, etc. Then we analyze the history of the relationship: the partner they are looking for, who they pretended to be, what they expected from a partner, how their partner let them down, how they reacted. What conflicts arose between them, what methods of fighting they experienced and what they themselves used, what were the consequences, how they coped, what happened to their mutual feelings, what is their current relationship. Upon completion of this analysis of each of them, I propose a symmetrical analysis of a partner. What patterns of behaviour they brought from their home, what type of partner they were looking for, who they pretended to be, what they felt let down with, how they coped with domestic conflict, and how they now see their mutual relations. After that we discuss what each of them now expects from their partner and what they are prepared to do. Individual meetings with each partner are carried out until each of them understands both their own behaviour and the conduct of their partner. Not only knowledge and understanding both their history's are important but above all a deeper consciousness of their experiences and to become aware of what is really important for each of them in their relationship. Only after such individual preparations can joint marital or family sessions begin. These relate to what is difficult for them in their partner's, how they cope, what they expect from one another and for what they are ready and prepared for as regards each other. This allows us to confront their previous perceptions about the partner with what they really want and what they are going through. These sessions are also devoted to rebuilding the mutual bond of trust and understanding and to make mutual expectations more realistic. This is often the most important and hardest part of the process. Of course, working with every family is different and the steps presented are overly simplified, but its basic features are similar and apply not only to families from social margins.