

IFTA congress Abstract

Providing psychological and legal support to the sibling bond: an emerging necessity in contemporary family contexts.

In modern societies, children are faced more and more with vulnerable adults and parents. In addition to economic precariousness, relational depletion is a major concern in occidental families. Couples are not meant to last forever, bonds to families of origin seem more tenuous and communities don't offer the same support as they used to.

In this context, the sibling bond appears more than ever as a potential source of support, resilience and long-term stability. Studies have demonstrated that sibling relationships may have a protective effect throughout life (Cicirelli, 1995) and serve as a moderating factor between stressful life events and psychological symptoms (Gass, Jenkins & Dunn, 2007; Feinberg & al, 2013).

Unfortunately, in most of the countries around the world, there is a lack of legal protection of the sibling bond. In terms of the right to personal contact after a parental separation, after the adoption of one sibling, or in terms of the right to live together in the case of a placement ordered by a judge, there is a lot to do to support this very specific bond.

When children are placed in institutional care, most of the time the economic and administrative constraints impose a separation of the siblings. Thus, not only do children have to deal with the traumatic experience of being separated from their parents but they also have to deal with the separation from their siblings.

However, the placement of siblings in a same institution or foster care offers a unique opportunity to reinforce their relationship, which may represent a solid source of relational permanence and security. Moreover, welcoming siblings together gives the chance to work on their shared roots and parts of history that can be hard to deal with alone. It also provides keys for a better understanding of each child's behavior and experience, like pieces of a puzzle that would remain unintelligible unless being put together.

There is a crucial need for laws and public policies developed on the basis of clinical practice and research with siblings, in order to understand and protect this specific bond.

Short description

In modern societies, children are faced with vulnerable parents. In this context, the sibling bond appears more than ever as a potential source of support and long-term stability. There is a crucial need for laws and public policies developed in order to understand and protect this specific bond.