

## The Vomiting Girl

One Saturday morning, a father brought for consultation his 7-year-old daughter complaining of her vomiting everyday for the last week during the second school lesson.

When the therapist (Plamen) tried to orient the conversation towards possible exceptions from the problem, girl's strenghts, etc., the father became very upset and refused answering his questions.

He declared he has some kind of 'analytical approach', so he refused to talk about anything else but "the cause for her condition, as we can only handle the situation if we know why this happens".

At his point in the session the therapist had no idea what to do, so he decided to follow the client, and asked the usually avoided (in SFBT) 'why' question:

- Okay, what do you think is the cause of this problem ?

- I think that her teacher in writing is to blame. My daughter has never been physically punished, and this teacher hit her on the head with her massive golden ring when she was not doing some task, so the child reacts to this aggression by vomiting, i.e. refusing to accept such a crude attitude. Maybe we need to change the school she goes to.

- Okay, and what does the teacher think about this ?

- Well, she says my wife gives the child too many antibiotics on necessary and unnecessary occasions, so she vomits as a side reaction to the drugs...

- And what does your wife say ?

- She is sure my parents are to blame, as we were out of town for a couple of weeks, they looked after the child at that time, and the problem started right after we came back...

- And what do your parents say ?

- They think my wife is feeding the child with unsuitable for her age and inappropriate food, and her stomach doesn't accept it.

The therapist asked the girl:

- Your father thinks it is important to know the cause of this, so do you have any idea about it ?

The father looked shocked by the idea that the little girl might have something to say on the issue, so quite intrigued he also asked:

- Yes, what do you think ?

The girl thought for some time, and replied:

- Well, I think the first time it happened by chance...

- By chance ?! - the father said - And what about the other times after ?

- Maybe it became a habit of mine.

...

- So, what are we going to do about it? – the father asked.

- Well, if my mother doesn't give me breakfast for a week, I shall have nothing to vomit, so the habit will go away.

The therapist asked the father:

- I promise to you that absolutely nothing bad will happen to your daughter if she has no breakfast for a week, having all her other daily meals. Do you think your wife will agree to this?

- Yes, if you say so! - the father replied.

- Okay, I say so.

After this session they never showed up again.

The therapist happened to meet the father in the street a couple of months later, and he said they didn't call again, as 'after three no-breakfast days', on Thursday the girl wanted to have her morning meal again. The problem was all gone.