

When divorced parents fight

Justine van Lawick

16-12-2011

Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

NUMBERS ?

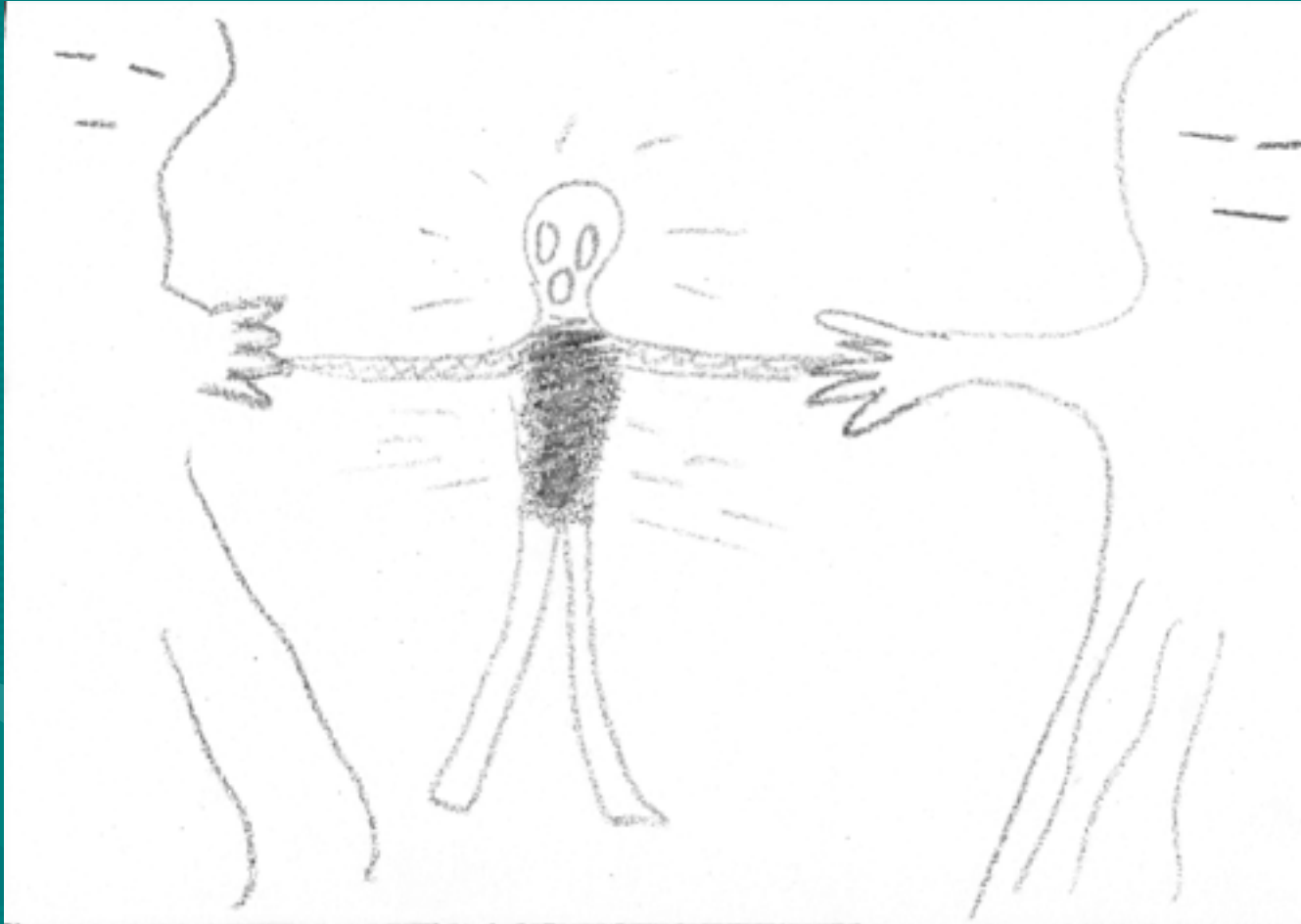
- In the Netherlands: each year 70.000 children experience a divorce of their parents
- 30% of the divorces are complicated, of this group 15% work out very problematic

This means that in the Netherlands more than 3000 children are caught in the divorce fights of their parents

Consequences

- Spruijt (2007) Amato (2000) most children do well after divorce. 30% of the children develop symptoms, mainly when parents fight

Torn apart



Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011



Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

Montag, 19. Dezember 2011

SOCIAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Lobby of the ‘silly fathers’
- 1998 : both parents have legal authority after divorce
- 2009: obligatory parental plan

We all get crazy

- Youth care; child protection, lawyers, mediators, therapists, social workers, family guardians
- The social network, family, friends, school
- Our secretary

Psychotherapy for the parents individually doesn't work

- Both parents are caught in a monologue:
THERE sits the perpetrator
- No reflection, acting out
- Powerlessness infects parents and all around
- Psychotherapy can make it worse

Child Psychotherapy is often not helpful

- Children feel more, suffer more: more symptoms
- Children wish change: stop the fights, but the situation doesn't change

Demonisation

- Demonisation is connected to denying the tragic side of life
- Demonisation leads to violence
- Demonisation is the opposite of mentalisation and reflection

Individual factors, relational factors and context

- Personal history, personality, history, dispositions, strengths, resilience, (psychological) health
- History of the couple relationship, relational trauma
- Economical and social context



WHAT USUALLY WORKS IN THERAPY DOESN'T WORK IN FIGHTING DIVORCES

NEED FOR NEW ROADS

Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

Creating space for change

When parents keep fighting:

- It can be seen as child maltreatment and it is not acceptable.
- Safety and development of the children should be in the centre
- Treatment route: becoming a better team as parents, voluntary if possible, obligatory if needed

OUR PROJECT

Four families together,

PARENTSGROUP

CHILDRENSGROUP

RESEARCH (new questionnaire to measure
demonisation; analysing the recordings)

Program Parents group

- Six sessions of three hours, one pause
 1. Recognising destructive patterns and being able to stop these
 2. Children in the centre, what happens to them?
 3. Reconciliation rituals
 4. Working together, mothers and fathers
 5. New solutions for complicated issues
 6. Social network and safety in the future

START

EACH SESSION:

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

Montag, 19. Dezember 2011

Destructive patterns

- Blaming the other
- examples

What happens to the children?

- Information and exercises
- examples

Reconciliation

Acknowledging the pain

Reconciliation: accepting the tragic, accepting the other as a good enough parent

Only then the child can stay a whole

Tutu:

reconciliation cannot be achieved by denying the past, but without reconciliation there is no future.

Presence

- Presence of therapists
- Seeing them together in the intake
- Stopping the trials
- Making a family room for all parents and children together during the pauses
- The parents have to work together in one way or another
- Therapeutical presence

SAFETY FIRST

- What is needed so that all that love the children can trust the situation.
- Signs of safety
- Social network

CHILDRENSGROUP

- SAME TIME AS PARENTS
- MAKING A MOVIE

SHOWING THE MOVIE TO THE PARENTS
IN THE LAST SESSION



Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

WORK IN PROGRESS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Justine van Lawick, 16-12-2011

Montag, 19. Dezember 2011