

Understanding the First Mental Breakdown from the Families' Perspective Through Metaphors

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Abstract : Introduction. Language is the basis to our experience as human being. We use language in describing our experiences and construct meaning and narratives from experiences. Metaphors are a valuable linguistic tool commonly use. Metaphors link two domains that are ordinarily not related. Metaphors achieve simultaneously multi-level integration: abstract and concrete, rational and imaginative, familiar and the unfamiliar, conscious and preconscious/unconscious. As such, metaphors epistemological and ontological tool that are important in social work in every field and domain. Goals and Methods The presentation's aim is to validate the value of metaphors through the first psychiatric breakdown is a traumatic for families. The presentation is based on two pooled qualitative studies. The first study focused on 12 spouses: 7 women and 5 men, between the ages of 22 and 57, regarding their experiences and meanings of the first psychiatric hospitalization of their partners diagnosed with affective disorders. The second study focused on 10 parents, between the ages of 47 and 62, regarding their experiences and meanings following their child's first psychotic breakdown during young adulthood. Results Two types of major metaphors evolved from the interviews in farming the trauma of the first mental breakdown. The first mode - orientation (spatial) metaphors, reflect symbolic expression of the loss of a secure base, represented in the physical environment, e.g., describing hospitalization as "falling into an abyss." The second mode- ontological metaphors, reflect how parents and spouses present their traumatic experiences of hospitalization in terms of discrete, powerful and coherent entities, e.g., describing the first hospitalization as "swimming against the tide." The two metaphors modes reflect the embodiment of the unpredictability, being mired in distress, shock, intense pain and the experience the collapse of continuity on the life course and cuts off the experience of control. Conclusions Metaphors are important and powerful guide in assessing individuals and families' phenomenological reality. As such, metaphors are useful for understanding and orientated therapeutic intervening, in the studies above, with the first psychiatric hospitalization experienced, as well as in others social workers' interventions.

Keywords : first mental breakdown, metaphors, family perspective, qualitative research

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