

Казка як інструмент психологічної підтримки у кризові часи

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Анотація. У статті досліджується терапевтичний потенціал казки як інструменту психологічної підтримки особистості у кризові часи. З'ясовано, що травматичні події, які становлять загрозу життю або фізичній цілісності людини, можуть спричинити тривалі психоемоційні порушення та дезорганізацію системи особистісного досвіду. Установлено, що травматичні спогади нерідко характеризуються фрагментарністю, порушенням наративної послідовності та труднощами вербалізації, що ускладнює їх інтеграцію у структуру автобіографічної пам'яті. Обґрунтовано, що одним із ефективних підходів до опрацювання психотравматичного досвіду виступає наративна терапія, у межах якої особистісний досвід інтерпретується через конструювання та переосмислення життєвих історій. Визначено, що наративні практики сприяють формуванню цілісної біографічної нарації, реконструкції життєвих подій та інтеграції складних емоційних переживань у систему особистісного досвіду. Доведено, що у структурі наративних терапевтичних підходів особливе місце посідають казки та фольклорні оповіді, які завдяки символічній природі образів і архетипній структурі сюжетів забезпечують можливість опосередкованого осмислення внутрішніх конфліктів та кризових життєвих ситуацій. Встановлено, що терапевтичні казки створюють символічний простір, у межах якого складні емоційні переживання трансформуються у зрозумілі метафоричні образи, що сприяє зниженню психологічної напруги, формуванню відчуття безпеки та розвитку конструктивних стратегій подолання труднощів. Доведено, що ідентифікація з персонажами казкових історій дозволяє особистості символічно опрацювати власні переживання, формувати нові моделі поведінки та знаходити альтернативні способи розв'язання життєвих проблем. Представлена модель терапевтичного використання казкового наративу забезпечує поєднання емоційного залучення та психологічної дистанції, що є важливим чинником безпечного опрацювання травматичного матеріалу. Встановлено, що використання казки у кризові часи сприяє емоційній стабілізації, розвитку психологічної стійкості, формуванню відчуття надії та зміцненню внутрішніх ресурсів особистості.

Ключові слова: казка, казкотерапія, психологічна підтримка, травматичний досвід, кризові часи.

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Fairy tale as a psychological support tool in times of crisis

Annotation. The paper explores the therapeutic potential of fairy tales as a tool for psychological support of the individual in times of crisis. It has been found that traumatic events that pose a threat to life or physical integrity of a person can cause long-term psychoemotional disorders and disorganization of the system of personal experience. It has been established that traumatic memories are often characterized by fragmentation, disruption of narrative sequence and difficulties in verbalization, which complicates their integration into the structure of autobiographical memory. It is substantiated that one of the effective approaches to the processing of psychotraumatic experience is narrative therapy, within which personal experience is interpreted through the construction and rethinking of life stories. It has been determined that narrative practices contribute to the formation of a holistic biographical narrative, the reconstruction of life events and the integration of complex emotional experiences into the system of personal experience. It has been proven that fairy tales and folklore tales occupy a special place in the structure of narrative therapeutic approaches, which, due to the symbolic nature of images and the archetypal structure of plots, provide the possibility of indirect comprehension of internal conflicts and crisis life situations. It has been established that therapeutic fairy tales create a symbolic space within which complex emotional experiences are transformed into understandable metaphorical images, which contributes to the reduction of psychological tension, the formation of a sense of security and the development of constructive strategies for overcoming difficulties. It has been proven that identification with the characters of fairy tales allows an individual to symbolically process their own experiences, form new models of behavior and find alternative ways to solve life problems. The presented model of therapeutic use of fairy tale narrative provides a combination of emotional involvement and psychological distance, which is an important factor in the safe processing of traumatic material. It has been established that the use of fairy tales in times of crisis contributes to emotional stabilization, the development of psychological resilience, the formation of a sense of hope and the strengthening of the internal resources of the individual.

Keywords: fairy tale, fairy tale therapy, psychological support, traumatic experience, times of crisis.

Introduction

In modern socio-cultural and psycho-emotional discourse, crisis phenomena accompanied by a high level of anxiety, uncertainty and emotional disorganization lead to the formation of systemic challenges for traditional methods of psychological correction and psychotherapeutic influence. It is noted that classical approaches often do not sufficiently ensure the integration of traumatic experience, the restoration of basic feelings of security and the mobilization of internal resources of the individual, which is especially relevant in the context of social upheavals, military conflicts and other crisis circumstances. In this regard, the fairy tale, as a complex narrative phenomenon, acts as a kind of psycho-correctional mechanism capable of indirectly transforming emotional and cognitive experiences into symbolic models, integrating traumatic traces of experience into the mental space and stimulating the formation of constructive behavioral strategies and cognitive schemes of adaptive response.

However, despite the recognized therapeutic potential of fairy tale therapy, there is a lack of theoretical analysis of the structural and functional mechanisms of its influence in different age cohorts and crisis contexts. In particular, the processes of identification with the character,

transformation of plot models and symbolic representation of traumatic experience, which determine the effectiveness of the fairy tale narrative as a psycho-emotional regulator and a resource of psychological support, have not been sufficiently studied. This justifies the relevance of conducting a comprehensive study of the fairy tale as a psychotherapeutic tool capable of ensuring the integration of internal experiences, stimulating personal development and forming psychological resilience in periods of social and individual crises.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern research on the use of fairy tales as a means of psychological support is developing at the intersection of psychology, psychotherapy, pedagogy and philosophy of education. The growth of interest in narrative methods of psycho-emotional stabilization is due to the intensification of crisis phenomena in the social environment, which actualizes the search for effective tools for the development of adaptive resources of the individual.

The fundamental principles of understanding the psychological potential of a fairy tale are laid down in analytical psychology. K. Jung interpreted fairy tale plots as a manifestation of archetypes of the collective unconscious, which contribute to the integration of internal psychic conflicts [11]. Further development of this approach is presented in the works of V. Kast, who emphasizes the therapeutic value of fairy tale narratives in psychoanalytic practice [12]. B. Bettelheim proved that folk tales help to interpret one's own fears and life difficulties through symbolic images [21]. M. Molicka, D. Bretta define fairy tale therapy as a specialized psychotherapeutic method aimed at overcoming emotional difficulties and correcting fears through symbolic plots and metaphors [23; 24].

M. White, D. Epston, S. Grafanaki and J. Macleod, within the framework of narrative psychotherapy, consider fairy tales as a tool for reconstructing personal experience, which contributes to the transformation of problem-oriented narratives into constructive life scenarios [14; 15]. The works of B. van der Kolk, G. Fischer and P. Riedesser emphasize that the process of narrative processing of traumatic events plays a key role in restoring mental balance and integrating traumatic memories into the structure of personal experience [1; 5]. Empirical studies confirm the effectiveness of fairy tale plots in psychotherapy. Thus, Ruini K. et al. [27], Rölzig K. et al. [28] showed that traditional fairy tales in group narrative therapy increase psychological well-being and strengthen the resilience of the individual.

Thus, the fairy tale acts as an effective tool of narrative psychotherapy and psychological support, combining symbolic, metaphorical and cultural-archetypal mechanisms of understanding life experience. At the same time, modern discourse emphasizes the need for in-depth research into the potential of fairy tale therapy in times of crisis, in particular for overcoming the psycho-emotional consequences of war and other collective traumas.

Statement of the task. The purpose of the article is to conduct a scientific and practical study of the psychological potential of a fairy tale as a tool for supporting the individual in times of crisis, as well as to determine its role in restoring psycho-emotional balance, developing adaptive resources, and forming internal resilience.

Results

Traumatic events in psychology are considered as situations that pose an immediate threat to the life or physical integrity of a person and are beyond his voluntary control, so in the absence of proper psychological processing and integration of such experience, traumatically caused mental disorders can form [1; 2]. Traumatic experience is able to have a long-term impact on the system of self-perception of a person, his value orientations and general vision of the world, so in this regard it is advisable to consider it not as an isolated episode of the life path, but as an integral part of the biographical history of the individual [3]. The results of the studies show that traumatic events experienced in the past can act as a risk factor, increasing a person's vulnerability to further stressful influences and intensifying the manifestations of traumatic disorders in times of crisis [4].

One of the important problems in the process of overcoming the consequences of psychotraumatic experience is the integration of experienced events into a structured and meaningfully ordered system of personal experience. Scientific research shows that traumatic memories are often characterized by fragmentation, disorganization, and difficulties in verbalization, which significantly distinguishes them from ordinary autobiographical memories, which have a more consistent and logically ordered structure [5; 6]. At the same time, the ability of an individual to form a coherent narrative of their own life experience is considered one of the key psychological mechanisms for constructing identity and maintaining internal psychological stability [7]. Narrative understanding of events contributes to the ordering of life experience, the integration of disparate episodes into a holistic semantic system, and the formation of a more coherent picture of personal history. In this context, narrative practices are an important tool for psychological work with traumatic experiences, as they create conditions for the reconstruction of life events, their semantic reinterpretation, and the gradual restoration of the psychological integrity of the individual [8; 9].

It is worth noting that the use of narrative strategies in clinical psychology and psychotherapy has a long scientific tradition. Researchers emphasize that stories, myths and symbolic stories can act as an important tool for understanding individual experience and emotional experiences of a person [10-13]. Within the narrative approach, the psychotherapeutic process is considered as a special form of joint construction of stories, in which the therapist and the client interact through the interpretation of life events, giving them new semantic meaning [14; 15]. Such interaction contributes to the rethinking of personal experience and the formation of a more holistic life narrative.

From the perspective of narrative therapy, psychological difficulties are often associated with the dominance of limited or fragmented life stories that focus mainly on problems and negative events. In the process of psychotherapeutic work, such problematic narratives are deconstructed and alternative life stories are integrated, which contributes to the formation of a more saturated and resourceful life perspective [14]. Research shows that the use of narrative approaches is effective in working with emotional disorders, in particular anxiety and affective states [16].

In this aspect, narrative therapeutic approaches aimed at reconstructing life stories and forming new interpretations of lived experience become important, which contribute to the integration of traumatic memories into the system of autobiographical memory and reduce manifestations of psychological distress [7; 17]. Reconstructing biographical narratives creates opportunities for the formation of alternative, more constructive meanings that change the self-perception of the individual and contribute to the integration of complex life experiences [18; 19].

It is worth noting that a decisive place in narrative psychological practice is occupied by **fairy tales and folklore stories**, which have significant symbolic and psycho-educational potential. Analytical interpretations of fairy tales show that their images and plot structures reflect universal psychological conflicts, life trials and processes of personal formation [20; 21]. That is why fairy tale characters and their life trials can be used as metaphorical models for understanding complex life situations and internal experiences [22].

A special place within the narrative approach is occupied by therapeutic fairy tales, which are created with the aim of overcoming specific psychological problems and crisis experiences. Polish researcher M. Molicka notes that in such narratives a symbolic world is formed in which a child or adult is given the opportunity to find a way to overcome fear, anxiety and other emotional difficulties. Thanks to the metaphorical form of presentation, complex experiences are transformed into understandable images, which helps to reduce psychological tension and form a sense of security [23]. A similar approach is also used in clinical psychology, in particular, clinical psychologist D. Brett developed a system of so-called "therapeutic stories", in which the characters find themselves in situations similar to those experienced in real life, in

particular, fear of the dark, family conflicts or increased anxiety. Through identification with the characters, the child or adult is given the opportunity to symbolically process their own experiences and find a model for constructively overcoming difficulties [24].

The famous psychologist Bruno Bettelheim emphasized that fairy tales help to understand the complexity of life situations and emotional experiences through symbolic images that allow for a distanced exploration of fears and internal conflicts [21]. Similar ideas can be traced in the concept of Carl Jung, who interpreted fairy tale plots as symbolic representations of archetypes - universal structures of the psyche that reflect the collective experience of humanity and function in the sphere of the collective unconscious. It is the archetypal images of heroes, trials and victories over difficulties that form stable psychological scenarios that help a person navigate difficult life circumstances [11].

From a pedagogical point of view, a fairy tale performs an important ideological and educational function. Ukrainian teacher Vasyl Sukhomlynsky emphasized that a fairy tale is a kind of "cradle of thought", which forms the child's moral orientations, develops his imagination and leaves a deep emotional mark on the life experience of the individual [25]. In this context, a fairy tale acts as a source of moral and ethical principles and value orientations, which contribute to the formation of a child's worldview and the development of his spiritual culture [26].

The content of fairy tales covers a number of psychologically significant topics, including overcoming difficulties, building internal resources, developing resilience, hope, and meaning in life. [27] The fairy tale, traditionally defined as a story about the "miraculous," is based on archetypal motifs and reflects universal human experiences. The symbolic system of fairy tale images and its structured plot organization provide the possibility of an indirect understanding of complex emotional experiences, combining emotional involvement in the narrative with maintaining the necessary psychological distance, which is an important factor in the process of processing traumatic experiences.

The traditional structure of a fairy tale, which involves the hero going through a series of trials and achieving a positive ending, performs an important psychological function. It creates a sense of hope, demonstrates the possibility of overcoming crisis situations and promotes awareness of the potential for personal growth after experiencing difficulties. In a psychotherapeutic context, fairy tale plots are often used as metaphorical models for understanding internal conflicts, reflecting existential crises and possible ways to overcome them [28].

The struggle of fairy-tale characters with difficulties can be seen as a metaphorical reflection of a person's psychological conflicts, which allows them to indirectly address their own traumatic experiences without directly confronting them. [29] Thanks to this, the fairy tale creates a safe symbolic space for processing emotional experiences, forming new life perspectives, and strengthening faith in their own ability to overcome difficult life circumstances.

An important characteristic of fairy tales is their richness in symbolic images [30]. In a therapeutic context, fairy tale characters can be interpreted as symbolic manifestations of various aspects of the inner world of the individual, which contributes to a deeper awareness of internal experiences and psychological conflicts. In addition, a fairy tale can act as a kind of transitional phenomenon that creates a distance from immediate reality and allows symbolic processing of internal conflicts that are difficult to directly perceive. Its metaphorical language forms a protected psychological space within which complex and painful topics can be explored through a system of images and symbols.

Due to its structure, the fairy tale allows for a symbolic representation of biographical turning points and life crises that are often difficult to comprehend directly. The use of fairy tale narratives creates the possibility of a distanced understanding of one's own experience,

contributing to the integration of traumatic experiences and the formation of a holistic life story [28].

An important feature of fairy tale narratives is their ability to form a deep emotional connection between a person and a character in the story. In most cases, a person has a "favorite fairy tale" with which they identify their own life experience. Such identification allows them to project personal experiences onto the storyline of the story, which creates the possibility of symbolic processing of internal conflicts and the search for alternative models of behavior. That is why a fairy tale often reflects the hidden psychological needs of the individual or his desire for change.

In the practice of psychotherapy, fairy tales are often used as a tool for analyzing a person's life scenarios. For example, the fairy tale about Snow White may reflect the experience of emotional alienation or conflicting relationships in the family, in particular in cases of interaction with narcissistic parents. In such a context, therapeutic work is aimed at transforming the internal image of a negative character and forming a new psychological model of perception of the situation. Similarly, the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" symbolically reflects the problem of rejection of one's own traits or internal contradictions. Awareness and integration of these aspects of the personality contributes to the harmonization of the internal mental space and an increase in the level of psychological stability.

In times of crisis, a fairy tale performs an important compensatory function, creating a symbolic model of overcoming difficulties. The plot structure of most fairy tales involves conflict, struggle, and a positive ending, which creates a sense of hope and the possibility of change in a person. Such a narrative format allows one to distance oneself from one's own problems and consider them in a symbolic dimension, which contributes to a more objective analysis of a life situation and the search for effective ways to solve it. At the same time, fairy tales form a positive scenario of events in a person's mind, which becomes a psychological support in difficult life circumstances [31].

One of the promising areas of psychological support for people experiencing crisis or traumatic events is biographical fairy tale therapy, which combines elements of narrative therapy, symbolic thinking and creative writing. Within the framework of this approach, a person's life experience is transformed into a symbolic fairy tale, which allows structuring the events experienced, giving them a new semantic context and forming the prospect of further personal development. The therapeutic process within the framework of this approach involves several consecutive stages (see Fig. 1): symbolic representation of life experience, which provides an indirect reproduction of key biographical events through symbols and images; narrative transformation into a fairy tale plot, which involves a metaphorical reconstruction of experience to maintain psychological distance and process emotional stress; construction of a trajectory of personal changes, which is aimed at outlining intermediate steps between the current state of the individual and the desired results of personal development; reflection and integration of narrative experience, which provides a rethinking of the experienced events, contributes to emotional relief and the formation of a more holistic image of the personality. Each stage of the model combines emotional involvement and psychological distance, which is critically important for the safe processing of traumatic material and the development of the individual's cognitive-emotional resources.

It is worth noting that the model demonstrates the effectiveness of the structured use of fairy tale narrative as a therapeutic tool for integrating life experiences, mediated comprehension of complex events, and stimulating the development of psychological resources and adaptive strategies of the individual.

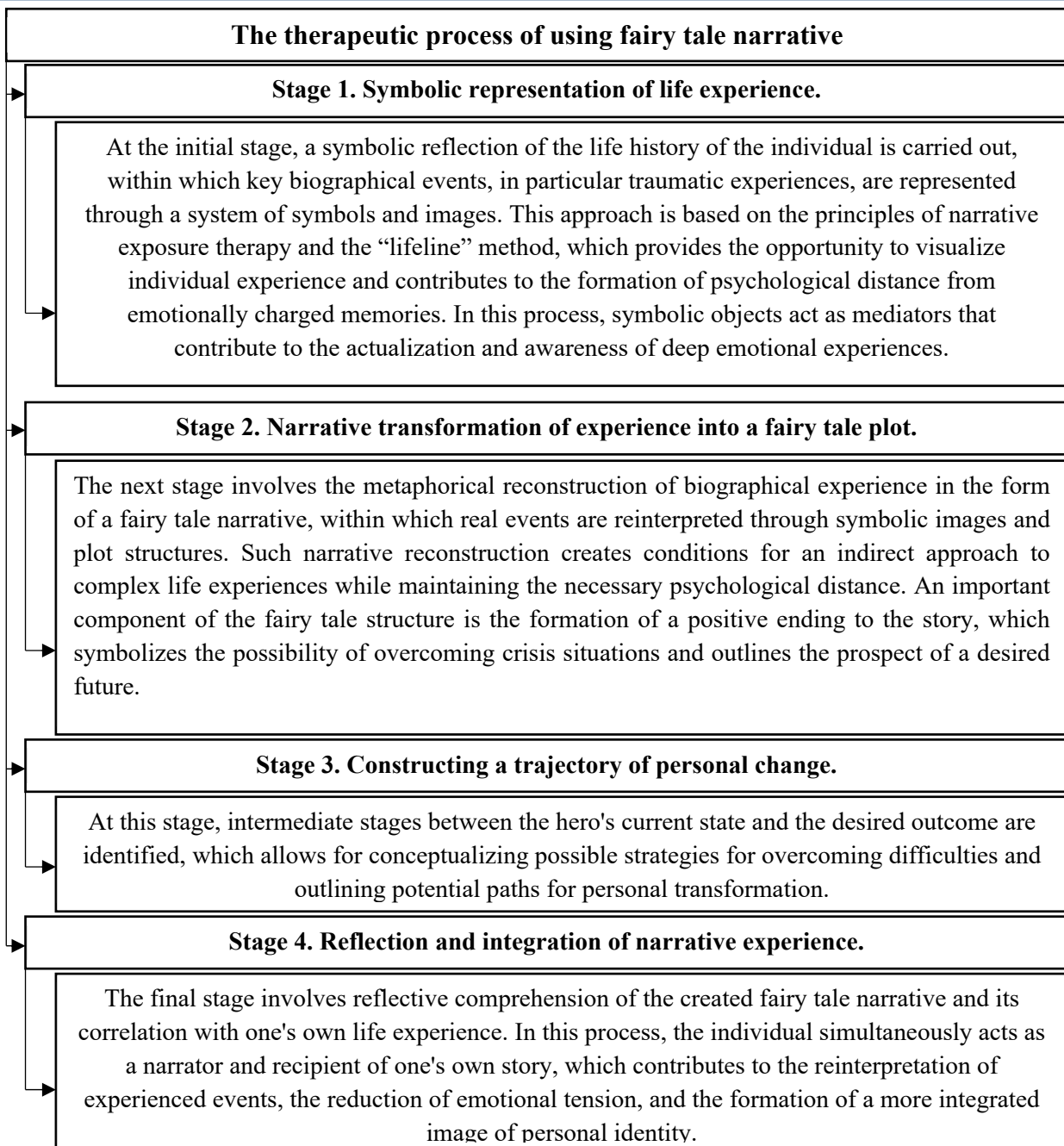


Fig. 1. Therapeutic process of using fairy tale narrative
Source: author's own development based on: [7; 9; 18; 19; 28].

Research shows that the use of biographical storytelling in the therapeutic process contributes to emotional regulation, the formation of a sense of security and a change in the perspective of the perception of traumatic experiences. Symbolic reinterpretation of events allows the integration of fragmented memories into a more holistic life story, which has a positive effect on the process of restoring psychological balance. In addition, such narrative reconstruction contributes to the development of psychological resilience, as it activates various coping strategies - emotional, cognitive and imaginative [28].

According to psychodynamic approaches, a significant part of a person's mental processes functions at the level of the unconscious, determining his behavioral reactions, emotional attitudes and models of interaction with the social environment. The subconscious accumulates individual experience, forming peculiar psychological complexes that are activated in the process of perceiving new life situations. In this context, fairy-tale narratives can play the role of a symbolic "container" for subconscious experiences, since they allow a

person to indirectly become aware of his own emotions and life difficulties. The transfer of unconscious attitudes to the plane of awareness creates the prerequisites for psychological transformation and constructive behavioral response [31].

Current research confirms the effectiveness of integrating digital narratives into the formation of a therapeutic environment and training professionals to use fairy-tale narratives as a tool for psychological support [32].

Traumatic war experiences determine a complex of psychological reactions in children and adults, manifested in increased anxiety, somatized fears, regressive behavioral patterns, impaired emotional regulation, and loss of a sense of stability and security. According to Nicole Porter Wilcox, war trauma is recorded not only in the cognitive sphere, but also in the bodily experience of the individual, which necessitates a holistic approach to psychological recovery [33]. Therefore, warm emotional interaction, narrative support, and symbolic understanding of the experience can modify the way traumatic events are experienced and contribute to the reconstruction of a sense of security in both children and adults.

In response to the challenges of wartime, a digital ecosystem of psychological support has been formed in Ukraine, focused primarily on children, but potentially useful for adults as a tool for emotional stabilization. In particular, the Pavlusha and Java initiative offers audio fairy tales and lullabies as a means of recreating a symbolic space of home comfort and emotional stability, which performs a compensatory function in the situation of loss of the familiar environment [34]. An important institutional form of support is also the NUMO platform, initiated with the participation of international and state structures, which ensures the continuity of preschool education and integrates fairy tale narratives into the system of comprehensive child development in accordance with the international ECERS-3 standards [35].

At the same time, in situations of limited access to digital resources, the oral form of fairy tale therapy becomes particularly relevant. Discussion of moral dilemmas of characters, staging plots in the format of puppet theater and creation of author's stories provide a multidimensional therapeutic effect: they stimulate cognitive activity, develop communicative competence and contribute to the ecological expression of emotions in children and adults. In the structural and functional aspect, fairy tale therapy performs diagnostic, prognostic, educational and corrective functions, providing a comprehensive impact on the psycho-emotional state of the individual [36].

A special place is occupied by the creation of authorial therapeutic fairy tales that reflect the individual problematic experience of a person. A clear compositional structure - exposition, conflict, search for a solution and a positive outcome — forms a model of constructive overcoming of difficulties. In the process of identification with the hero, the recipient internalizes his strengths, which expands the psychological resources of the individual and increases the level of stress resistance [37; 38]. The combination of fairy tale therapy with art therapeutic techniques, in particular, theatricalization or visualization of plots, additionally activates the creative potential and mechanisms of emotional self-regulation [39].

Thus, a fairy tale in times of crisis appears as an integrative psychological and pedagogical tool that combines cultural tradition, symbolic representation of experience and therapeutic function. Through narrative reconstruction of reality, it contributes to meaning-making, restoration of internal balance and formation of psychological stability of the individual regardless of age. Since human thinking has a narrative nature, the story appears as a universal form of self-awareness and comprehension of internal experience, which enhances the therapeutic potential of a fairy tale as a tool of psychological support in conditions of social turbulence.

Conclusions

As a result of the conducted research, it was found that a fairy tale is an effective tool for psychological support in times of crisis, and the use of fairy tale narratives creates a safe symbolic space for understanding complex life experiences, which makes it possible to integrate traumatic experiences into a holistic biographical story. The therapeutic function of a fairy tale is determined by the ability to indirectly represent psychologically significant events and promote the rethinking of personal experience through symbolic images and plot structures. The results of the study showed that traumatic events that pose an immediate threat to the life or physical integrity of the individual, without proper processing, can lead to the formation of mental disorders, increased anxiety, impaired emotional regulation, and reduced adaptive resources. Therefore, in this aspect, the fairy tale acts as a psycho-emotional regulator that contributes to the reconstruction of traumatic memories, the formation of a holistic life narrative, and the development of psychological resilience.

The study confirmed that the therapeutic effectiveness of fairy tales is determined by several key mechanisms. First, the symbolic representation of life experiences provides psychological distance from traumatic events, allowing for the safe processing of internal conflicts. Second, the narrative transformation of biographical experience into a fairy tale plot contributes to the semantic rethinking of experienced events. Third, identification with characters and plot models activates the internal resources of the individual, stimulates the development of constructive strategies for overcoming difficulties, and forms a positive life perspective.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of integrating fairy tale narratives into psychological, pedagogical and therapeutic practice, and the presented model of therapeutic use of fairy tales demonstrates the potential for increasing emotional stability, developing psychological resilience, and forming a sense of security in children and adults. Further research could be directed at studying the integration of fairy tale therapy with art and narrative techniques, assessing the effectiveness of digital narratives in different age groups, and analyzing the mechanisms of transformation of traumatic experience through the symbolic and archetypal structures of fairy tales.

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