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EDITORIAL

When the paths of mediation and adoption meet...

Intrinsic to some traditional cultures, or a true emerging professional field, family mediation opens its doors to adoptive families. As evidenced in this editorial, it offers them many advantages.

Like any life story, the story of an adoption may be punctuated with crises, in particular at key moments, such as adolescence or in the search for origins, to cite just the most obvious. Just so many key periods in life, when a dialogue is essential to avoid family break-ups between the adopted child and his adoptive parents. This is when the family mediator may intercede among the adoption actors, by providing these families with the tools to solve their conflicts, to establish a dialogue, and to create, on the basis of their own resources, a new kind of bond, within which everyone finds his place.

From the importance of dialogue within families...

An adopted person's adolescence often causes the emergence of identity and deep existential questions in him or her, which may lead to crises, which, when confronted with, adoptive parents feel at loss with. Where do I come from? Why was I adopted? Who am I and what is the meaning of my life? Just so many questions that adoptive parents are not always able to answer. When the dialogue ceases and when communication becomes impossible, the area of family mediation may make it possible to resolve the situation, by offering a neutral environment, in which speaking may be free, without any judgement.

Thanks to his tools, the family mediator may bring these persons to listen to each other again, and to establish another means of communication, thanks to which everyone feels recognised and heard. He may help them

express the needs that are hidden behind their words, the intention that guides each of their actions. That is why post-adoption organisations have developed, within their entities, services of family mediation aimed at helping families. According to one of these, 'the family mediator may promote a resumption of the dialogue between the parents and the adolescents, through the negotiation of material aspects relating to the gaining of autonomy'. In view of the serious difficulties and family break-ups experienced by some adolescent adoptees, resorting to family mediation henceforth deserves to be considered, as much by the professionals as by the families.

Furthermore, as highlighted by Jaime Ledesma del Busto (see p. 3), other family situations may also require the intervention of a mediator, such as relationships between biological children and adopted children, which are often marked by some fears and ambivalent feelings, or the cases of separation or divorce of the adoptive parents, which may resulted in the adopted child experiencing a feeling of second abandonment.

... to the support of adoptees searching for their origins

Another crossroads, at which the paths of adoption and family mediation meet, is the search for one's origins, which may be undertaken by adopted persons. The support provided by the mediator to all the persons involved in this situation appears to be increasingly essential. The lengthy experience of the International Social Service, which has assisted adopted persons in searching for their origins for many years, and the creation of post-

adoption services focusing on this issue, are evidence of this.

As reflected in the article on page 3, a family mediator may provide the affected persons with a neutral, safe, and – just as important – confidential environment, overseen by a professional, in which they will be able to express and welcome their multiple emotions, in order to pave the way for a potential meeting with the other, if they wish to do so. Family mediation, with one of its objectives being the provision of support in the construction and reconstruction of bonds, once again finds its role in adoption. Indeed, is the latter not the story of bonds that sever, are created and sometimes recreated? Without aiming for the latter to be kept alive at all costs, the mediator will help the affected persons in moving forward in this identity search, which is both individual and collective. When the search for one's origins goes as far as meeting the biological family, it raises the question of building a new

relationship and everyone's part in these new family dynamics.

In cases of open adoption, in which the bond with the biological family does not terminate with the adoption, mediation may also prove useful in order to 'define' the relationships among the three parties involved as well as the position of some in relation to the others.

Thus, the ISS/IRC promotes this valuable instrument, which provides adoptive families with a unique space, in which their emotions may be catered for, and in which their own abilities will enable them to find solutions in situations of internal and external conflicts. It only remains for us to start working on disseminating and developing this key instrument, aimed at establishing a family and social dialogue, based on peace, empathy and the true listening to the other.

The ISS/IRC team
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