TOC in School: Zoran's Story, Verica Sekulic
Belgrade, Yugoslavia
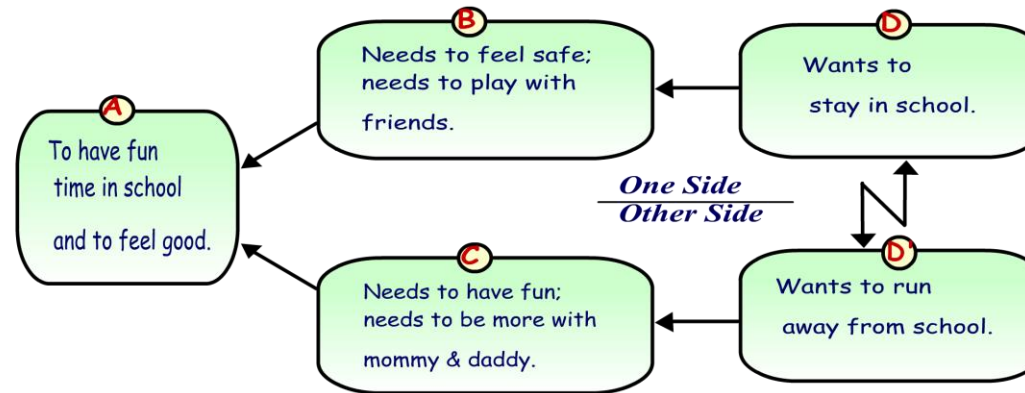*From positive to negative attention* **p.1**

USING TOC TO MOVE FROM NEGATIVE ATTENTION TO POSITIVE ATTENTION

In the group of children I work with there is one very handsome and clever boy Zoran (6), who has during his time with us become a master of attracting negative attention - he likes to interrupt our activities, to make other people angry and even to fight physically with other children. Because of his exceptional strength, he beats his opponents. His parents often punish him. One morning Zoran made a plan to run away from school. He called Nina and Milica, the girls of the same age, to make the plan together. Zoran drew the plan. It was like this:

1. They would tie me up and make a mess with toys all around the school, burn the school and run away.
2. They would then walk around and everybody would go home.

I didn't notice anything strange in the beginning, thinking they were drawing as usually. They laughed in the beginning, but soon Milica started to cry. I asked her what had happened. She was so afraid she didn't dare to tell me. Zoran was smiling provocatively.

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I made a suggestion to use the "cloud" in order to solve their problems. They decided to speak. Nina explained to me the whole plan very reasonably and sincerely. Milica cried even more. Zoran laughed and tried to make Nina responsible. I was relaxed and friendly and Zoran stopped laughing.We put cushions on the floor as "clouds."
Zoran and Milica set on the first pair of cushions.

A To have fun time in school and to feel good.

B Needs to feel safe; needs to play with friends.

D Wants to stay in school.

One Side
Other Side

C Needs to have fun; needs to be more with mommy & daddy.

D Wants to run away from school.

Milica realized very fast that she didn't have to do the things she didn't feel safe about and didn't like doing, even if her friends asked her to.
She realized that she didn't want to run from school at all.
I helped her to feel safe with the words that I am a teacher and big and that I can help her feel safe.

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Zoran said that he wanted to run away because he wanted to have fun.
Teacher: "OK, and what else?"
Zoran was silent.
Teacher: "Do you need anything else?"
Children from the group participated.
Rena (age 5): "He needs a sister, that's what he needs!"
Zoran: "I need my brother too. No, I need a bicycle".
        Teacher: "Bicycle? Why do you need a bicycle?"
Zoran: "Because I want to go far away and disappear forever".
I asked him to try to finish the sentence again.
Zoran: "I want to run away from school because I need to be more
        with my mother and father".
Teacher: "Is there any other way to be more with your father and
        mother except running away from school, which will make
        your parents afraid and worried?"
He is silent again. Other children gave their ideas.
Nina: "You can help your mother while she works in the house and
        doesn't have time for you. In this way you can be more with
        her and it's funny to work together".

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Zoran: "I want to help her, but she doesn't allow me, she says
            I can help only when she says so".
Teacher: "Why don't you try to tell her directly and clearly
              that you need to be more with her and father?"
Zoran: "Yes, but she never listens to me".
Milica: "Why don't you surprise her, you can carry her bags or something?"
Zoran: "When she was ill, I had to carry her".
Teacher: "You carried her?"
Zoran: "No, my daddy. It was very difficult to carry her".
Teacher: "Why don't you make up something pleasant, a nice surprise
                for her instead of unpleasant surprises you make every day?"
He liked the idea and took his pencils to draw her a nice surprise.
Later he finished his drawing for his mother and father - it was a letter.
It was a big step for him to move from the position of negative
attention to the one of positive attention, clearly showing his real need.
When his mother came he needed time and courage to show her the letter
and even more time to tell her he wished to be more with her and father.

The children and I had several good realizations:

1. Milica realized that in order to have friends she doesn't have to do
   anything her friends tell her if she doesn't feel safe and fine.
2. Zoran realized why he shouldn't run away from school.
3. Zoran understood his real need - to be more with father and mother.
4. I realized very clearly Zoran's real reasons for disruptive behavior.