# A COUPLE'S NAVIGATOR On course for work+ life balance





# A COUPLE'S NAVIGATOR

ON COURSE FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

NATASZA KOSAKOWSKA-BEREZECKA MAGDALENA ŻADKOWSKA MAGDALENA GAJEWSKA

AGNIESZKA WROCZYŃSKA MARTA ZNANIECKA



# A COUPLE'S NAVIGATOR

## ON COURSE FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

NATASZA KOSAKOWSKA-BEREZECKA

MAGDALENA ŻADKOWSKA

MAGDALENA GAJEWSKA

AGNIESZKA WROCZYŃSKA

MARTA ZNANIECKA

Review Jacek Jakubowski Dorota Szczepan-Jakubowska Małgorzata Lipowska, PhD, Associate Professor

Drawings Magdalena Danaj

Cover designer Karolina Zarychta

Composition Michał Janczewski

Translation Aleksandra Cacha

Proof-reading Katarzyna Dudulewicz

This publication is realized within PAR Migration Navigator project (WLB\_GE) funded from Norway Grants in the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development

















© Copyright by Uniwersytet Gdański Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego

ISBN 978-83-7865-410-0

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego ul. Armii Krajowej 119/121, 81-824 Sopot tel./fax 58 523 11 37, tel. 725 991 206 e-mail: wydawnictwo@ug.edu.pl www.wyd.ug.edu.pl

Online bookstore: www.kiw.ug.edu.pl

# **Table of contents**

Introduction   7
Thanks   17
Chapter 1 Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness   19
Chapter 2 Couple in the mood for change, no fuss – no balance   33
Chapter 3 A couple in the wash, breaking gender stereotypes   63
Chapter 4 Coupling couple – overcoming mental barriers   89
Chapter 5 Couple in Norway – or a few words about living in a different culture   115
Authors   133
Literature   135

# Introduction

#### Ahoy!

Our manual was created having all of us engaged in long-term relationships in mind - all the Michaels, Kates, Magdas and Martins. We have our ups and downs, sometimes we navigate in the rough seas and are thrown overboard and sometimes we catch wind and gain impetus. Using our professional and domestic experience we want to share with you but also with each other – the knowledge we have gained through multiple years of research on men and women, interviewing couples, mediating other people's relationships, coaching and therapeutic practice, and – most of all – being together. This Couple's Navigator we developed will lead you through consecutive steps of proficiency and competence that we consider crucial in the process of building a satisfying relationship. Things to be found on our map: games and communication, conflicts, stress, domestic duties and sexual life. We offer a shared cruise on the waters of everyday life.



INTRODUCTION

7

#### SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP

The starting point for this manual is the belief that first and foremost one can learn to have a satisfying relationship. It is an arduous but extraordinarily rewarding endeavour. Second of all: a fulfilling relationship does not mean staying in a constant state. Just as it does not happen by chance, it does not remain unshakeable, because it changes, as does every other process. Third: the process of building a partner relationship posits the establishment of a space to negotiate the roles we play. The roles we play in a relationship are not set in stone and shouldn't be set in stone. What I am responsible for in a relationship can sprout from my needs, your needs, our needs, and sometimes is just a matter of having to do something as fast as possible. We can talk about our roles and negotiate them. In doing so we should take into consideration the needs and expectations of both partners and, if possible, try to reach a consensus, which would meet all of our needs. To do this effectively we need to really care about the common good of our relationship, not just our own good. Fourth: taking care of our relationship also means taking care of ourselves, which ultimately strengthens the WE area – because we are a team, a family team. What benefits does this bring? For one, a better balance between various aspects of our lives, because in doing so we support each other, both at home and at work.

In our manual we also want to turn your attention to seven important issues:

- 1) learning intersexual empathy i.e. learning to look at things from the perspective of the other party: your partner:
- 2) dealing with stress related to work-life balance;
- 3) providing partners with communication skills in a relationship which serves to maintain work-life balance;
- 4) learning to plan mutual goals while at the same time respecting the partners' individual plans;
- 5) helping to organise life so that our home life supports our work life, and vice versa;
- addressing the tendency of contemporary women to try and fulfil the unrealistic goal of being simultaneously ultra feminine, exceptional mothers and wives and employees of the month in their demanding full-time jobs;

7) addressing the tendency of contemporary men to try and fulfil the unrealistic goal of being ultra masculine – super strong and efficient, exceptional fathers who provide a safe and nurturing environment for their offspring while maintaining a demanding high-powered job.

# A couple under the microscope

Most couples in Poland are made up of people who were born in 1975–1984. They come from a generation of change regarding, among other things, family and couple relations. People born in those years started their own families at various age of their lives – some of them were 20, some of them were 40. The demographic mean age of getting married and having a first-born child grew with them. Hence some of you, belonging to this generation of change, are parents to grown-up children, and some of you are still planning to have children one day soon. And some of you do not want to have children at all, at least for now. Nevertheless each of you experiences the results of these aforementioned socio-cultural changes and has to cope with the challenges of day-to-day life.

You are in the process of constructing and reconstructing newtype relationships and playing newly established roles. The socalled emotional baggage we all carry around since we left our family home plays an important role in constructing these roles. After all, both of you grew up in two different homes where common everyday issues like who should perform household chores or how children should be brought up were settled by your parents in a way that suggested these were universal solutions that every family implemented; yet, in reality, they were just the only solutions you were aware of as a child. Thus, the gender-driven domestic roles we observed in our family homes as children are often the ones we ourselves implement thoughtlessly in our own families to this day. Thereby, at least two such homes and at least four role models (your parents and your partner's parents) 'hang over' your bedroom and kitchen. Sometimes there are also grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, because lots of you lived in multigenerational families. As adults, we often unconsciously mirror our parents' personality features and behaviours - in fact these are often GENERATION OF CHANGE

INTRODUCTION 9

more visible in our manner of being than our own personality features. However we are often referred to as "generation of change". Where does such a change come from?

# Some history...

# FIRST-WAVE

Looking closely at the history of female emancipation we can see a few waves of change. There was the first wave, which brought women the right to vote and educational rights. Women appeared on the labour market in great numbers between the First and the Second World War, filling up the posts emptied by men who were busy fighting in wars. Women began studying at universities; they took up jobs stereotypically attributed to men. During the Second World War women's emancipation intensified. They performed all possible jobs, they manager others, they actively served in the army. After The Second World War there was a struggle on both sides of the Iron Curtain to give the public sphere of life back to men and make women retreat to the domestic sphere of life. More and more children were born and women "went back home". In Western Europe and the United States, women worked mostly before they got married. Then they would devote their lives to bringing up the children. The husbands were expected to be breadwinners and ensure their family's safety, whereas women were supposed to be responsible for the home.

At the same time, in the 50's, communist countries emphasised the introduction of equal status for men and women. Inasmuch as the majority of women actually studied and worked, parenting and domestic chores did not seep into men's worlds. In Western Europe and the United States the cultural revolution of 1968, also called the sexual revolution, proved to be a turning point in the history of the modern family. Problems related to the public-private division were discussed. The issue of the role conflict that working mothers have to deal with was first raised (Rapoport 1971).

# SEXUAL REVOLUTION

# SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

The second wave of feminism protested against the strict division of our world into the world of women and that of men, respectively. Both researchers and activists focused on proving that women are equal to men. Therefore, the issues that

pertained to parental roes were side-lined. Consequently, both in theory and in practice, equality ended when couples had their first child.

## Women working two shifts

Third wave feminism continued the idea of the second wave as far as equality of rights in the workplace was concerned and once more addressed the issue of household chores. Arlie Hochschild (1998) noticed that inasmuch as the number of active women on the labour market increased, it did not influence the number of men who were active at home. Hochschild dubbed it a stalled revolution and stated that the so-called second shift – bringing up children whilst being a breadwinner – remained mostly in women's competence. Women spend a greater number of hours doing household chores than men do – this trend is still alive and well in all EU countries (Eurostat 2013). The Polish also follow this pattern.

However, after a few decades of women's presence on the labour market, an important change is taking place regarding people's attitude to household chores. On the one hand, marriages are no longer based on the fundamental exchange: children and their upbringing in exchange for the family's financial and physical safety (Beck, 2002). On the other hand, as Ann Murcott claims, household chores are starting to be perceived as a job and like in any other job we can control for quality and measure the time it takes to perform a given chore, and finally evaluate the satisfaction of both the "customer" and the worker (Murcott, 1983).

The example of household chores shows clearly it is not an easy task to assure that both partners in a couple do their fair share of household duties. Relationships ought to last as long as both partners in a relationship feel their needs are being fulfilled (de Singly, 1996). The analysis of French families and couples shows that nowadays what people expect from a relationship is to experience intimacy and a chance to be able to be who they really free from the burden of externally assigned social roles.

THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM

INTRODUCTION 111

# Surfing the waves together on a single surfboard

VALUE OF THE FAMILY Our lifetime is ruled by social duties and stages set by biological, mental and social cycles of human growth. Being with others, building intimate relationships, or parenting (if we plan to have or already have children) may be some of our basic needs, which - for many of us - are essential if we want to achieve a sense of fulfilment, safety and happiness. A happy family is the first runner up in terms of life goals for Poles, health being number one. Although we know just how important good relationships with our loved ones are to our sense of happiness, we still spend very little time building this sense. And many people lack effective tools to improve their relationships with their partners and children with. It is perhaps a rather naive view, but we believe many divorces could be avoided if partners were taught in advance how to talk to each other, how to understand each other's needs and how to perceive their partner as someone they co-create a family with.

WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE

Another serious threat to the quality of our relationship is posed by ourselves and by our priorities, which are perpetuated by culture we live in. Nowadays, we seem to spend our whole days at work, at school or on our way to and from work and school. The tasks we perform demand commitment. Each of us resolves work and personal issues almost simultaneously every day. Civilisation changes have caused work-related stress to spill over into our private lives. It is getting harder and harder to separate our work from our personal life. More and more we tend to put off unfinished and important projects to a time when we are supposed to rest, eat, develop our hobbies and relationships. It is hard to mindfully develop our parent and partner competence in such circumstances. Finding balance between our work, hobby, the sports we practice, love, parenting and our family becomes a real challenge. It is good to be aware that achieving a permanent sense of balance is impossible in the long run in today's world. It is rather a question of constantly maintaining a sense of balance. Contemporary couples' lives today resemble a walk two people take on the deck of a ship. To maintain balance they need to not only become aware of their own needs and those of their partner, but also

notice the signals their partner sends out and... not fall overboard. The movements of one partner influence the position of the other. As in life, what one person does in a relationship influences what the other does. If we decide to engage in this 'home and family project' together, we should be aware we are interdependent and need to cooperate in the fulfilment of tasks which aim to enhance our mutual project.

#### Life balance

Searching for balance in our private life and in our relationships very often starts when we realize that we lack this balance. We find ourselves performing one of our many chores and we suddenly realise there are too many things we are in charge of and that our life is not quite what it should be. Our mood worsens, our relationships with loved ones become more difficult and our subconsciousness sends us somatic signals that something is "wrong". Just like good health, a sense of balance in life is invisible to most of us as long as we have it. We realise what balance is and how important it is in our and our family's life only when we run into major problems – we are unable to obtain our goals or fulfil our basic needs, we experience conflicts, go through a bad break-up or suffer a depressive episode. To sum up: experiencing crises signals the need to work on balance in our lives.

In this manual we show that crises in our relationships with significant others offers us the chance to rebuild ourselves and to grow as people. Searching for balance often sprouts from the pervasive awareness that some elements of our life have started to dominate in our lives, and some have altogether disappeared. Work, a demanding career, time-consuming self-development or excessive care for the functioning of our family are the dominant issues for many of us in today's world. Each of those elements may be a threat to our inner balance if we let it dominate our life. The path of a balanced life often starts with the experience of a personal crisis. That is when it begins: working on our needs, on the ability to fulfil them, on our relationships... We need some specific skills to achieve the goal of a well-rounded and well-balanced life. Our manual gives you a brief presentation and description of these skills.

CRISIS = CHANCE

INTRODUCTION 13

## So, take the plunge and good luck...

THE PLAN

Our main goal is to introduce some basic compact knowledge and training tools, which will help you, realise and reconstruct your own notion of a balanced life. Thanks to this you will recognise your roles and the way they help sustain the existing, often unsatisfactory rhythm of your daily life, lifestyle or household chore division. We start our navigation with everyday issues: being mindful and reflecting on our lives. We then take a closer look at how you deal with stress, how you communicate with one another and how you resolve everyday conflicts. Next we explore your ability to effectively share household chores and finally we set sail to the chapter, which will hopefully let you build and sustain the zone of greatest intimacy in a relationship



aka your sexual life. The exercises we attached to each chapter invite you to work on each issue unaided. Every chapter begins with a description of a couple struggling with some specific issues; next we describe separate skills based on the couple's example. We hope that you will recognize yourselves in characters described in our manual and that you will find their experience helpful on your course for work-life balance.

Our manual was created within PAR Migration Navigator project realised by a Polish-Norwegian team coordinated by the Institute of Psychology and Institute of Sociology at the University of Gdansk. Together with our partners from Norway (Centre for Cross-Cultural Communication and International Research Institute in Stavanger) we conducted over 150 interviews with Polish couples living in Norway (three times in 3 years), we analysed their diaries in which they wrote about their success in achieving a fair division of household duties and obtaining a sense of work-life balance. We examined over 1000 Poles and Norwegians by means of various questionnaires in search of the answer to the most important questions: what makes it easier and what makes it more difficult to achieve work-life balance? Our manual is based on these results, among others. An additional element of this book is the chapter about travelling as a couple: a chunk of knowledge for those considering living and working in another country, whether for a short or long period of time. As our research was conducted among Polish couples in Norway, the chapter is written from the Polish-Norwegian

Our three year PAR Migration Navigator research project was funded by the Norwegian Funds within the Polish-Norwegian Research Cooperation programme realised by The National Centre for Research and Development.

point of view. Still the information given may also prove useful for people who plan to relocate to other countries of the world.

Stationed at our "harbours": Gdynia – Sopot – Gdańsk – Stavanger, summer – autumn – winter 2015 and spring 2016

The Authors and their loved ones!

PAR MIGRATION NAVIGATOR RESEARCH

# **Thanks**

We want to thank our husbands and partners: Łukasz, Maciek, Marcin, Marcin and Michał for their love, support, inspiration, open minds and exciting course set on work-life balance, and to our children: Franek, Inka, Jagna, Marysia, Mikołaj, Ola, Róża and Staś.

We wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to our team partners from Par Migration Navigator project: Brita Gejstrad, Kuba Kryś, Svein Nødland, Gunhild Odden, Oleksandr Ryndyk and Gunn Vedøy, and to our associates from PAR: Krysia Adamska, Tomek Besta, Maciek Dębski, Agniszeka Grela-Pinkas, Magda Herzberg, Michał Jaśkiewicz, Paweł Jurek, Marta Kaczorowska, Agnieszka Kierończyk, Miłka Korzeniewska, Radek Kossakowski, Ania Kwiatkowska, Zosia Lisiecka, Weronika Mathes, Krzysiek Stachura, Tomek Szlendak, Justyna Świdrak and Sylwia Świeca.

We also wish to thank the Polish and Polish-Norwegian couples living in and around Stavanger, who took part in our research, patiently invited researchers to their homes for 3 years and described their everyday life on blogs in 2014–2016.

We are also grateful to the Polish and Polish-Norwegian couples living in and around Tricity, who took part in our research, patiently invited researchers to their homes for 3 years and described their everyday life on blogs in 2014–2016. Some of them experienced the workshop method first hand.

We want to thank all the participants of our research within the PAR project.

We also wish to thank Polish couples in Tricity who took part in a research on the household chore division in 2009–2010.

We want to express our gratitude to our Friends and Couples who read the manual and tested the workshop method for themselves: Agnieszka and Krzyś, Olga and Jaś, Magda and Wojtek, Gosia and Wojtek, Magda and Radek.

THANKS 17

We thank our team of reviewers – our publication has become much better thanks to you – Dorota and Jac Jakubowscy from Trop Group and to professor Małgorzata Lipowska from University of Gdańsk!

We wish to express our thanks to Joanna Kamień, our editor from University of Gdańsk Press – her energy and ideas how to make our book easy to use cannot be overestimated!

We are also grateful to our wonderful illustrator, Magda Danaj, who agreed to enhance our manual with her great drawings!

And finally, for English edition: we wish to express our gratitude to Ola Cacha and Kasia Dudulewicz – thanks to your translation and proofreading, respectively, our manuals will be useful for couples in Norway and all around the world!

# **Chapter 1**

# Mind the couple! – how to live under pressure and not go insane using mindfulness

Jerry reports: "Every time my wife attacks me, falsely accuses me of doing something or does something which is not in line with my expectations I see red. Then I raise my voice and am mean to her. I often yell. Even when I do not want to. It feels as if I have no control over it. My yelling just happens as if I was not there. Afterwards I often feel I have done her wrong but despite my firm resolution to react differently next time, I never manage to do so." After yet another quarrel with his wife during which he lost it, as per usual, Jerry storms out and goes shopping. The line he stands in turns out to be the slowest. There are a lot of people queuing and the atmosphere in line is thick with tension. A fellow-shopper elbows him as he makes his way through the store. When it is finally Jerry's turn to pay, the cashier starts to change the till roll, paying no attention to Jerry. Here is what our hero is thinking: "The dark-haired man who elbowed me knew precisely what he was doing - I saw him glancing at me, but still he did not apologize". It's obvious that the man has no manners! And that shop assistant – grumpy as usual, who does she think she is, a princess? What have I done to her to make her sulk so much. The Polish are so down-in-the-mouth. It is not motorways that they lack but manners."

On the one hand it may seem that Work Life Balance as a concept of introducing work-life balance into everyday life protects us from the excessive stress. Still it is worth realising that balance is not a state that – once achieved – will always be there for us. It is rather a constantly negotiated process. Dealing with

stress in a constructive way is one of the basic skills, which allow us to stay on the crest of a wave longer and makes it easier for us to quickly get back on board if a wave knocks us off.



#### Live with stress or die

The statement: a stress-free existence equals death (proposed by stress researcher H. Selye) suggests that instead of irrationally fighting off stress it is worth taking a look at it, to know what we are dealing with in everyday life.

RESEARCH ON STRESS Research on stress as a reaction to certain stimuli was started by W. Cannon and was then continued by H. Seyle in the first half of 20th century. Stress is understood as a psychophysical reaction of the organism, which points to the fact that both our psyche and our body are affected by it. Cannon defined stress as a state of disturbed balance within the organisms, which occurs in the context of threat. Threats trigger the "fight or flight" response. Threats signal danger to the organism and therefore it becomes alert and aroused. Heart rate, blood pressure and coagulability all increase along with blood sugar levels, our pupils dilate, more blood is delivered to our muscles and brain (Heszen and Sek, 2007).

SOURCES OF STRESS This primal mechanism is very well-founded. Let us imagine a huge animal is attacking us. In case of real physical danger,

stress triggers many changes in the system, which allow us to get a grip on ourselves and react appropriately by means of the fight or flight response. Now let us imagine another scenario – this one far more probable, one we encounter often in our everyday lives: a conflict with a loved one. In this case the "fight or flight" response will also be initiated, because it occurs automatically in case of any threat. The crucial point here is that contemporarily, when we are mostly threatened by social situations, this mechanism has become pointless. Researchers have stated that nowadays "the physiological signs of "fight or flight" have insignificant adaptation value and are only a threat to our health." (Heszen and Sek, 2007, p. 185). When we experience stress as a consequence of a guarrel with our partner, the "fight or flight" action does not take place. Therefore there is no culmination point and thereby we do not experience relief from built up stress and tension after the mobilisation phase. This results in suppressing the stress reaction and accumulating stress hormones in the body. When we experience stress on a regular basis, suppressing it may lead to symptoms associated with poor health such as chronic anxiety, high blood pressure, cardiac rhythm disorders, sleeping disorders, chronic headaches/ backaches, phobias. In response to these symptoms we often self-medicate with seemingly adaptive behaviours: smoking, excessive drinking, using drugs, overeating. All these behaviours can turn into addictions which in turn may lead to the physiological breakdown of our body: physical and mental exhaustion, depression and psychosomatic diseases.

It is important to be aware that stress is a special kind of deal as was suggested by Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman. According to these authors, stress is a "specific person-environment relationship, evaluated by the person as a burden and/ or exceeding their resources and threatening their well-being." (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, in: Jogińska-Bulik and Juczyński, 2005, p. 145). Stress is a process between a stimulus and our reaction to this stimulus. What is important is that we ourselves actively participate in this transaction. Even if at first sight it may seem that stress reactions happen to us and consequently they are out of our control, we should remember that a given stimulus is not a stressor itself, but becomes a stressor thanks to our interpretation of it (Everly and Rosenfeld, 1992). What

INDIVIDUAL REACTION TO STRESS

exactly does this mean? First, we must perceive something as threatening in order for it to result in stress. As stress is a matter of perception rather than reality itself, the number of potential stressors in our environment is greater than we might think. It does not mean we can outsmart stress and declare that it simply does not affect us as some stressors are absolute and have a significant "striking power" whether we perceive them this way or not. These are situations like being shot, being exposed to harmful chemicals or losing a loved one, to mention just a few. Other kinds of stressors are our thoughts and emotions with all the meaning we assign to them, e.g. some people may find joining a new community exciting, whilst in others this experience triggers anxiety, tension, fear and mental discomfort. Thus, the way we perceive and evaluate any given situation is of great significance in the context of stress.

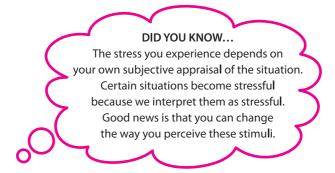
# DID YOU KNOW... There are external stressors such as difficulties with relationships with others, political changes or physical risks and internal stressors such as pressures we create ourselves that manifest themselves by specific emotions, thoughts and beliefs.

## Life on autopilot

Our reaction to stress is a reflex, an automatism, which happens, as it were, autonomously. This is well illustrated in the example of Jerry at the beginning of this chapter. Jerry reports on his response to stress brought on by yet another fight with his wife. He describes his tendency to react to certain stimuli with yelling, which probably happens quite often. Every time Jerry reacts this way, we may say, he practices his reactivity, which looks like this: the inappropriate (in his eyes) behaviour of his wife causes Jerry to blow his top and his yelling is the icing on the cake. Such seemingly "innocent" events nevertheless affect his sense of emotional balance. Before Jerry has had a chance to recover from one stressful event, another one occurs.

WHY ARE WE STRESSED?

Perhaps you know the following sequence of events from your own experience: growing tension, which culminates in an outburst of anger when you least expect it? We say then figuratively that a line had been crossed, which can be understood literally as a dramatic rise in the level of our stress hormones. In such a state of mind, it is extremely easy for us to perceive meaningless events as extremely stressful. Petty details can irritate us and "throw us off balance". We use quotation marks for a reason. We like to say, "something or someone threw us off balance". In an ad of some over-the-counter stress-relieving drug we recently heard on the radio, a woman confides: "My Andrew threw me off balance so much that I feel I won't be able to fall asleep. Again." But the truth is we throw ourselves off balance. Let us see then, how we can get back on course.



### Dirty bowls in the sink

In dealing with stress, there are two areas in which we can, potentially, exert some control. The first area refers to our evaluation of stimuli, which are rated according to their meaning to us as major or minor stressors. It is very interesting to observe from this point of view our own habit of interpreting certain situations as stressful. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2007) says that if you want to reduce stress in your life, you should take a look at how likely you are to take certain things personally when they are not really personal. So the "grumpy" shop assistant has an unfriendly expression on her face not because she is a grumpy person or because she does not like us, but rather because she is tired, or she has her own issues or maybe is suffering from a split-

YOUR INTERPRETATION

ting headache. Asking yourself: how personally do I take things which are not personal can be especially insightful, especially if we are in a relationship with someone.

#### EXPERIMENT BY KABAT-ZINN

It is worth mentioning here an anecdote by Kabat-Zinn (one from his own life) about fulfilling partner's expectations in a relationship. It is about cats' bowls. Kabat-Zinn's wife, Myla, would always put dirty cats' bowls in the sink. To say that her husband did not like this would be an understatement. In reality, he absolutely abhorred it – it evoked deep aversion in him, repulsed him and understandably irritated him greatly. However, his wife did not respect his often repeated request to stop putting dirty cats' bowls in the kitchen sink. He writes: "When I came across cat food in the sink a heated argument was very likely to follow, mostly because I felt angry and hurt and, most of all, because I felt justified in "my" anger, "my" injury, because I knew "I" was right." (Kabat-Zinn, 2007, p. 227–228). Time went by and after many unsuccessful attempts to resolve the conflict; Jon decided to experiment with the way he reacted to it. Instead of changing his response, he took a long hard look at it. Here's his account: "I observe the anger as it arises in me. It turns out it is preceded by a mild feeling of revulsion. Then I notice the stirrings of a feeling of betrayal, which is not as mild. Someone in my family didn't respect my request, and I am taking it very personally. After all, my feelings are important, aren't they?" (Kabat-Zinn, 2007, p. 228). He allows the feelings to linger, breathes through the experience and discovers that the initial feeling of revulsion goes away after a while. Finally he is able to put things into perspective.

This extensive description of an emotional experiment is an adroit introduction to the second sphere of our potential influence when dealing with stress: a wise manner of dealing with stressors. It is also an introduction to the practice of mindfulness.

#### Mindful attention to stress

#### MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness, according to Kabat-Zinn, is an awareness, which emerges as we direct our attention to the here and now in an intentional and non-judgemental way (Kabat-Zinn, 2007). This type of awareness is the exact opposite of the one experienced



during stress. "Here and now" is the last place and time we want to be in while experiencing a difficult situation. It can be explained by the fact that we respond with stress when we perceive a given stimulus as s) an emotional injury, b) a threat or c) a challenge (Heszen, Sęk 2007). Perceiving something as an injury to our self-esteem demands we go back to the past and recall something hurtful that has happened to us. In contrast, perceiving something as a threat or challenge requires anticipating the future and spinning scenarios of what is about to happen. Try recalling any stressful situation that you experienced recently and find out for yourself.

Saying that stress is an inescapable part of human life sounds like a tired old cliché repeated ad nauseam. What is interesting is that when the stressful event actually happens, almost every one of us forgets this narrative. It is because the need to avoid unpleasant experiences is an automatic reaction to stress. And whilst the avoidance strategy is understandable, it is utterly ineffective. The alternative is mindful stress management, meaning that we focus our attention mindfully on what is happening to us when we encounter stressors. The first step in dealing with stress is to acknowledge it. For starters, it is enough to notice anything: the stressors themselves, symptoms that accompany them like a stiff neck or clenched fists, emotions, thoughts racing through your mind or certain stress-relieving behaviours

we take up. Taking this first step towards stress management will allow us to befriend stress even if our first instinct is to run away from it. And boy do we run from it. It is enough to realise what we do when, for instance, we are furious. Screaming out loud, smoking, having a glass of wine or pouring our heart out to a close friend or family member are just some ways we all use to redirect attention from our own difficult experience to an act aimed at freeing ourselves of the anger. And although it is perfectly natural to do so it is merely a Band-Aid, not a lasting fix. The alternative is mindfulness, which is a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations in a given situation. It allows us to stop right where we are and acknowledge the fact that stress has paid us a visit, whether we like it or not.

#### WHAT DO WE GAIN FROM MINDFULNESS

First of all, mindfulness allows us to identify the moment we start experiencing stress. It is actually quite a challenge if you realise that all the processes that make up our response to stress occur quickly and automatically. Acknowledging here and now that we are experiencing stress may be the first and possibly most important step in dealing with this difficult experience.

Secondly, mindfulness allows us to recognise the experience of stress on three levels: bodily sensations, the ongoing emotions we experience and the thoughts that cross our mind. Acknowledging the fact that the body takes a major part in our response to stress is invaluable in stress management. It enables us to anchor in the "now", thanks to mindful breathing. To gain a foothold in such a rapid and often overwhelming process as stress is especially important. We can use breathing or any other sensation in the body. Paradoxically, despite the fact that noticing bodily sensations that occur, as a response to stress is extremely helpful in restoring our sense of balance, bodily sensations are very often ignored as we tend to think that it is 'just' our body. We are often very instrumental in the way we perceive and treat our bodies and therefore the wisdom of the body is often lost on us – we do not value it as much as we value the wisdom of the mind. The thing is though that the mind "goes nuts" when we experience stress - compulsive thoughts are a good example of this. It is our body that that holds the key to any desirable changes in situations of stress.

Thirdly, mindfulness gives us a chance to recognise habits, which underlie our experience of stress as well as the opportunity to develop habits, which would allow us to better deal with it in the future. If we mindfully observe ourselves in times of stress we will notice that, we experience stress when certain thoughts cross our minds e.g. I did not amount to much in life, I should be more efficient and productive etc. If we pay attention to what we think and feel in times of stress we will notice we tend to be very judgemental towards ourselves which only serves to intensify the stress we are already experiencing.

Furthermore, unquestionable advantage of practicing mindfulness is learning to put all the emotional baggage that we take so very personally in times of stress into perspective. Coming back to Kabat-Zinn's example and the cats' bowls: as long as his commitment to a certain narrative "She (the wife) does not respect me because she does not grant my request" lasted, his frustration increased. When he realised it was just a possible explanation for her behaviour, nothing more than his evaluation of the situation, he felt liberated. Putting things into perspective also gives us a chance to broaden our field of perception, which tends to narrow down when we are stressed into so-called tunnel vision. It means that rather than perceiving a given situation for what it really is, in its full context, bearing in mind that it is merely a single event of our day or week, our mind when stressed-out tends to focus in on these thin slices of reality and, what is even worse, tends to perceive it as the end-all be-all of our life, a complete picture of reality rather than a mere snapshot of the here and now.

And last but not least, earning to mindfully notice our response to stress makes us realise that ultimately, in the face of stress, we are free to make choices and decisions about what to do next. In the words of Viktor E. Frankl that there is a space between the stimulus and the response and that within that space lies freedom and the power to chose our answer (Frankl, 2009). The practice of mindful stress management acknowledges the existence of this space as the chance to change our automatic response to stress into a mindful, thought-over response.

However, there is one basic problem with mindfulness. It does not matter how much we know or read about it, how much we analyse it. Theoretical wisdom will only get us that far. When it

YOU NEED
TO PRACTISE

comes to mindfulness, practice makes perfect. That is why we strongly suggest you give the following exercises a go - you can try them out on your own or with your partner. The exercises we suggest you try refer to the basis of mindfulness practice and are an opportunity for personal growth – they will steer you away from intellectual reflection and steer you towards experiencing stress through bodily sensations, breathing patterns and ongoing emotions. Distress is marked by a racing mind judgemental and overly emotional. Our mind in this state is in no shape to make sensible decisions, it needs to be sedated rather than listened to. The only way to transform distress into eustress is to recognise the mental symptoms of stress (e.g. thoughts that magnify our experience of stress) and focus our attention on our body, which we often ignore when we experience stress. The process of "anchoring" ourselves in our body is a way to gain a foothold during times of stress when autopilot takes over. The thing is, everyone reacts to stress in a certain idiosyncratic manner – this reaction is set off automatically by our body and we are then "carried" by the wave of events. When stress hits us our reaction is instinctive, it kind of "happens" on its own – we have little to no control over what happens to us. Thanks to mindful breathing though, we can, as it were, switch from the automatic reaction mode to the mindful being mode which enables us to stop and realize "How do I feel?" and "What do I do now?", and ultimately help us answer the question: "What is it that I want to do?".

MINDFUL BREATHING AND STRESS

#### **Exercises for You**

#### **EXERCISE 1**



Take 5–10 minutes daily to practice mindful breathing. Sit in a chair in a quiet place. Set a timer/ alarm clock. Keep your feet on the floor, your back straight – it does not have to touch the backrest. Keep your hands loose on your thighs. Feel the weight of your body. Breathe mindfully. Feel the air pass through your body as you inhale and exhale it. Remember, you are not supposed to think about breathing but mindfully experience the act of breathing. Feel the air enter your body and pass through your nose, into your throat, your chest, and your abdomen. Next, focus on the experience of exhaling. Focus on the rhythm of your breath – feel the air go in and out. Give yourself a good

few minutes to really experience this. Your mind may wander, involve itself in various thoughts and emotions – let it, this is perfectly natural. We only ask you to acknowledge this fact when it happens and then re-focus your attention on your breathing.

Chose one routine, everyday activity (e.g. brushing your teeth, taking the stairs to another floor, drinking coffee) and try to concentrate on your breath while you perform this activity. Check if concentrating on your breath somehow changes the way you experience this activity.

**EXERCISE 2** 



**EXERCISE 3** 

Pair activities: What do you think represents the "cats' bowls" in your own, everyday life; that is, what is an especially touchy issue – for both of you, respectively – as far as your everyday chores are concerned? What do you expect from each other with regards to the issues you have brought up during this conversation? Think about the reasons that underlie your need to change any nuisance in your life (e.g. the need to feel respected, the need to feel safe and secure, the need for marital harmony). Listen to each other in an empathetic manner. Taking this chapter into consideration, consider any changes you could make in your life (perhaps you can change your behaviour or your attitude) to decrease the level of stress you experience because of this nuisance.

# **Summary**

Stress is a transaction where we can play an active and responsible role, first we need to evaluate the stressor in terms of its significance and then deal with stress itself – hopefully in a good way Therefore it is worth remembering the following steps:

**FIND YOUR WAY** 

- 1) The first step to dealing with stress constructively is to identify the moment we begin to experience stress.
- 2) Mindfulness teaches us to recognise stress on three levels: bodily sensations, ongoing emotions and thoughts connected to them.
- 3) If we imagine stress as a strong-current river we have fallen into, it is easy to perceive ourselves as helpless because the river has swept us away and is now carrying us downstream in a rather violent manner. It is hard to imagine we have any control over what is happening to

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

us. But the act of concentrating for a brief moment on our breathing and/or our bodily sensations in times of stress can be compared to concentrating long enough on what is around us – while we are being carried downstream by the strong current – to notice large tree branches sticking out into river, close enough to where we are that, with some effort, we can grab a hold of and save ourselves from drowning.

4) Mindfulness gives us a chance to recognise habits which underlie our response to stress and those which increase the impact of stress.

5) Mindfulness teaches us to move away from sources of stress and remove ourselves from stressful situations.

STEP 6 6) Learning to observe ourselves from afar in times of stress allows us to realise that ultimately when facing stress we are free to make our own personal choices and decide what to do next.

> Jerry, as a new convert to mindful stress management, decided to mindfully consider the anger he felt towards his wife, who did not fulfil his expectations. During subsequent quarrels with his wife, Jerry started to direct his attention towards his bodily sensations. He noticed the main bodily sensation he experienced during outbursts of anger was an increase in pulse rate in his temples. He used to say that he simply saw red but now he also notices an increased heartbeat, short, accelerated breathing and a pervasive sensation of heat, particularly in his head. Jerry also started to pay attention to the feeling of anger he experiences during his outbursts and the compulsive thoughts that go through his mind when he blows his top. Despite many failed attempts to "control himself" he still screams and shouts when he reaches his boiling point. However, during the most recent argument he managed to notice when exactly he crosses the point of no return and blows his top and was therefore able restrain himself a little bit and his outburst and it was somewhat less harsh. Jerry also noticed that he bounces back from anger quicker than before because he is able to focus his attention on the way the unpleasant situation affects his body, and also on his thoughts and the emotions he experiences. As he continues to practice mindful self-observation when he experiences stress, Jerry will most likely notice that there is indeed a second or two, right before his automatic response (raised voice) sets in,

which he can use to breathe mindfully and restrain himself even more. During this brief moment of mindful breathing he may just be able to get in touch with his body, and as a result calm himself down. Such an unexpected response may surprise Jerry's wife so much that she might just be willing to listen to what he has been raving about all along.

#### **Recommended reading**

- Everly G.S., Rosenfeld R. (1981), *The nature and the treatment of the stress response*, Plenym Press, New York.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2009), Wherever you go, there you are. Mindfulness meditation in everyday life, Hachette Books.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2013), Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation, Bantam.
- Siegel R.D. (2010), *The mindfulness solution; everyday practices for everyday problems,* The Guildford Press, London, New York.
- Williams M., Penman D. (2011), *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*, Rodale Books, Emmaus, PA.

# **Chapter 2**

# Couple in the mood for change, no fuss – no balance

Agnes gets up in the morning after a sleepless night. One more time her one year old son woke up every hour or so, probably because of a runny nose. And who got up every hour to soothe him? Who hugged him and gave him drops and cough syrup? Of course it was her, as per usual, because His Majesty did not bother to help. Apparently, in his words, she does the job better and faster. Truth be told, when he gets up at night to soothe the baby, she keeps giving him pointers on what to do and how to do it – e.g. she tells him he should be quieter, he should give the baby this or that – and in the end they are both wide awake because they argue about what to do to make the baby go back to sleep as soon as possible. So perhaps it is better that only she gets up. On her way to the bathroom she stumbles over his shoes in the hall. He did not put them away again, and let's not even mention the dirty socks on the floor in the sitting room. And the dishes, still in the dishwasher. Soon enough,



he blames her for growling at him in the morning, as usual. Even though he tries so hard. But everybody knows he will never get things right. If only they could go out together once a week. Alone. To the cinema. For a dinner date. To a party. Or even just for a walk. Without the pram. Or if she could sleep through one whole night, without getting up.

Andrew gets up in the morning after a sleepless night. True, he did not have to get up to take care of their child, because she was always faster, as usual. It seems their baby-boy is partial to her. Probably because she was with him during the first nine months. Andrew would gladly be more involved in childcare now, but every time he does anything, she scolds him. She criticizes him and keeps giving him pointers on how to do everything properly. That is when they argue. And it is not pretty. So maybe it is better to let her do everything herself. But though she is the only one getting up at night he always wakes up as well and stays awake the whole time she is soothing their son in case she needs his help. She never does. And in the morning she is jumpy as a frog and as cross as two sticks.

But it was him who took care of the baby yesterday afternoon and in the evening – he played with him, he fed him, took him for a walk and bathed him, so that she could finish her work. Only after the baby fell asleep did he start on his work, which he finished at 1AM and just flaked out. As he was going to the bedroom to go to sleep he noticed the dishwasher and the washing machine were half full. She did it again, why? Can't she wait 'till they are full before she runs them? You can unload the dishwasher and hang up the laundry less often. And sure enough, they will argue that he didn't do something she asked him to do. They use to be able to talk things out like normal people. And now... they don't do anything enjoyable together anymore, just the two of them.

According to research by Anna Titkow, Danuta Duch-Krzysto-szek and Bogusława Budrowska (2004) as well as the newest reports by the European Union (2014) and CBOS (Hipsz, 2013), the majority of household and parenting chores are still performed mostly by women in all European countries. On the other hand, over 60% of women think it is best for both women and men when both partners work and share their household and parenting duties 50/50. Based on her research, Anna Titkow's et al. also shows that over 70% of women try to encourage their part-

ners to take a greater part in domestic chores. To no avail. Men do less household chores than women (CBOS, 2013) although they feel pressured by their partners to get more involved in the world of cleaning, washing the dishes etc. – 74,9% of men are aware of their partner' expectations (Titkow i Duch-Krzysztoszek, Budrowska, 2004).

The above-mentioned research also indicates that women use a soft kind of persuasion, asking men to do domestic and family chores and not bringing matters to a head. As a result, they strengthen their "position" of hearth managers and put men in a position of short-term workers who moves in when the manager cannot guite cope. This way women and men sustain role division and a scope of authority which may negatively influence work-life balance, because the probability that men will take responsibility for domestic chores (they do it occasionally, when their partners ask them) decreases, as well as a chance that women will be more present in the labour market (they would be, if they had fewer domestic chores, were they taken over by men). One of the reasons for this situation is setting partners up as opponents in the game of "who works at home, who works at work". There are bigger chances to achieve worklife balance for both partners if they make use of the rules for cooperation, where the "family" team focuses on common goals, negotiates the path to achieve them and makes a final decision on how to divide the roles. Entering the path of cooperation requires entering the path of conflict – the sphere of everyday life where various needs of both partners collide. They may seem contradictory at first glance but it is not always so.

BALANCE!

IT'S ALL ABOUT

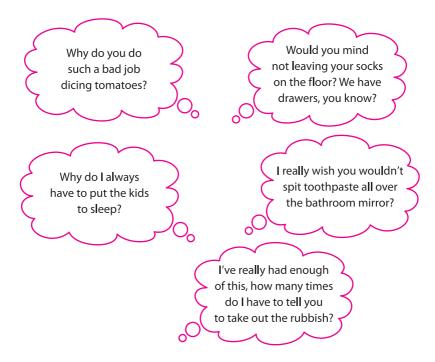
Take the example of Agnes and Andrew's relationship described in the beginning of this chapter, they clearly have certain expectations towards each other, which are not contradictory – in fact it is quite the opposite, their expectations complement each other. But they have never tried to talk constructively about it. To talk in a way which would enable them to express their needs, reveal their expectations, name shared goals and decide how to fulfil them as a family, together. Below, are a few conditions that need to be fulfilled to make such a talk effective and for it to lead to... results that are mutually satisfying.

First though, we would like you to recall at least three instances in your personal life when you were able to resolve a conflict constructively. What proved to be helpful? Was it a few seconds to think, a moment during which you could step back and look at the whole situation from afar?

## POWER OF REFLECTION

Before we start to work on our conflict-resolving style, it is worth remembering that there is great power in reflection. Reflection allows for mindfulness, and thereby kindness towards ourself and our partner, and this is an important and beautiful step in trying to understand each other. It is also important to open up to emotions – they are a great source of feedback about ourselves, our relationship and our needs. In other words, what we recommend in this chapter is self-awareness, reflection and mindfulness. Let us look closely at ourselves and at each other.

# Why is conflict a good thing and why do we need it?



Let's take a look at these statements; if they sound familiar, it means you are a couple living together and you share your living space. It is small enough for your different lifestyles and cleanliness standards and practices to clash, which sometimes leads to domestic guarrels and fights. If additionally you are also struggling on a daily basis to stay on top of both work and your family life, and you happen to also have children, these struggles may sometimes take form of very tense talks, often blown out of proportion by tiredness or severe sleep deprivation. Life partners who both struggle to achieve perfect work-life balance oftentimes resemble two people trying to surf waves on a single board. If you don't want to go overboard you better be really good at communicating and cooperating. And this in turn requires lots of sensitivity, responsiveness and consideration for our own needs and those of our partner. And then there is also the issue of communicating these needs well...

In this chapter we introduce basic knowledge of conflict resolution. Apart from giving you some crucial tools and techniques for effective communication and making it easier to achieve a consensus, this chapter aims to show you that conflict is essential for the preservation and growth of any relationship.

GOAL OF THIS CHAPTER

Most people react negatively to the word "conflict" – most people associate quarrels with helplessness, aggression, disappointment and difficulty. These emotions are known for killing the mood in our personal life and are equally hard to bear at work. On the other hand, conflict is an imminent part of our everyday reality – it always takes place when there is an interdependence of interests between people – thus in most spheres of life.

In any case, it is not the conflict itself that is the source of misunderstandings, but the way it is resolved.

Is it possible to resolve conflict so that the result is equally satisfying to both parties? The experience of many conciliators – that "third", neutral party in any conflict – says it is. Conflicts between co-workers, between employers and their employees, between business partners, as well as between life partners – can all be resolved using the same mediation techniques. Me-

MEDIATIONS AND CONFLICT diations aim to create a space for discussion that increases the chance for mutual understanding. Only on such grounds can we begin to come up with satisfactory solutions to any problem. The knowledge described here is used by conciliators in order to facilitate understanding between people in various, both easy and difficult, moments in life. We have chosen those elements of our know-how which, we think are useful in everyday life.

Generally, we all have different ideas about living together, starting with who should take out the rubbish, what our future child should study at college, and what ought to be done to support the refugees. All this means that we are a healthy and open couple who share their opinions with one another. And this is the core of any good conflict: as effective resolution of conflict means we share opinions in a way that:

- 1) does not impose our point of view on others,
- 2) and increases the probability of meeting our needs.

CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT
AND NOT
MANAGING
PEACE

Avoiding confrontation (if I say what I think, I will spoil the mood) is a part of the attitude based on an assumption that relationships are managed by agreeableness: a good couple is an agreeable couple. On the other hand, paradoxically, excessive agreeableness may suggest that partners avoid confronting each other and do not communicate their needs and expectations to their partner. We are different, we have different ideas and opinions, and we often perceive the same behaviours very differently. Kazimierz Dąbrowski proved the supremacy of conflict over a conflictless state in his positive disintegration concept (1979). He claimed that a disturbance in balance and mental comfort is essential for personal growth. Thanks to conflict the status quo is broken which gives way to a new, improved outcome for both individuals and their relations with others.

In this chapter we will present the conditions, rules and techniques to help couples effectively achieve goals by conflict resolution. In other words we will try to show how work-life conflict can be transformed into work-life balance.

The majority of studies suggest the following stages of conflict resolution in relationships:

 Preparing to confront the other party – we analyse the needs we want to fulfil in a relationship, our own style of reacting to conflict, our ongoing emotions. We name points of dispute and define goals: what we want in a relationship, in our family life STAGE 1

2. Initiating interaction – we chose the right moment and we ask for time to talk, we indicate the issue we want to talk about, to let the other person t prepare for discussion.

STAGE 2

Negotiation – where we set the rules of a talk, analyse
the source of conflict and the related issues (together)
and come up with solutions we are both willing to accept. Next we chose the best ones using techniques of
effective communication.

STAGE 3

4. Exiting conflict: we can establish an alternative plan B just in case – it states what we are prepared to do if our agreement is not respected.

STAGE 4

Here are the essential steps we need take to effectively move through all these stages.

## How do Polish couples argue?

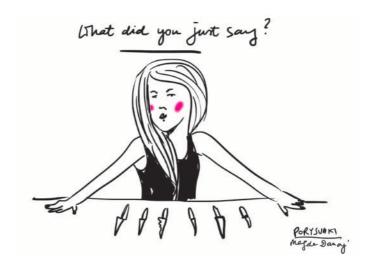
#### DID YOU KNOW...

A staggering 89% of Poles claim that in a situation of conflict between partners in a relationship one party should put their tail between their legs and back down just to maintain peace and quiet. 32% think it is "best to pretend nothing happened."

(CBOS 2008 for Partners Poland Foundation)

CBOS research (2008) for Partners Poland Mediation Centre indicates that Poles value peace and quiet at home and they often choose to avoid conflicts instead of confronting their partner and telling them about their needs. As a result, we manage more with pseudo-agreeableness than with conflict resolution. We avoid talking about difficult issues and we prefer it when

AVOIDING CONFLICTS



our partner recedes. If this fails to do the job we fiercely fight for our rights.

As a result of conflict avoidance, unexpressed and accumulated sorrows can make the partner who usually recedes feel more and more frustrated and unfulfilled. Such unexpressed feelings can negatively affect the relationship in more ways than one. On the other hand, when partners ferociously fights for their rights it often results in aggression. This leads to conflict escalation.

So a conflict is like a fire: used skilfully it warms us but otherwise it burns down our house of love to a cinder.

## Emotions, the sons and daughters of our needs, are essential in conflict

Imagine the following situation: you are lying on the couch under a blanket, it is warm and cosy, you feel comfortable and all you need to feel utter bliss is a cup of hot tea. And it just so happens that your partner is in the kitchen. So you sweet-talk him/her: "Honey, I would really love me a cup of tea, would you be so kind and make me one?"... And then you hear a firm NO in

response. What do you feel when you hear this? Anger, sorrow, irritation, sadness, confusion – how come? So you will not even make ME a cup of tea...???

The message: "Honey, I would love me a cup of tea, would you make me one?" signals the physiological need to drink tea. However the feelings which emerge after your request is met with refusal refer to another need, not the one communicated in the request. The feelings of anger, irritation etc. do not arise from the fact that you will not get to drink a cup of tea (because you can get up and make it yourself). In this situation these negative emotions that emerge after your request is declined are a signal that other needs will also not be met – specifically, so called higher level needs (Maslow, 1943) – the need to be cared for, to experience your partner's attention and tenderness.

The emotions we feel in relationships with others are the sons and daughters of the needs we want to fulfil in our lives. The more important they are, the more intense emotions they evoke, for example joy when our needs are fulfilled or anger when they are not. Being in a relationship with somebody close to us, sharing intimate moments, is an area where there are a lot of mutual needs and expectations.

BEING AWARE OF EACH OTHER'S NEEDS

There is a range of needs people want to fulfil. These are physiological, psychological and procedural needs (Maslow, 1943; Moore, 2009). Physiological needs are very palpable needs referring to food, water, shelter. Psychological needs are exceptional for the intensity of emotions they may evoke – these are the needs of safety, belonging, love, respect and self-realisation. The third group of needs are procedural needs. They are also important as far as conflict resolving is concerned because they refer to the preferred form of communication with others. Some people function better in a calm and open discussion by the table, others need "sparks to fly", because only then do they feel the air has been cleared.

## =An exercise for You – the needs in my relationship

#### **EXERCISE**



1. How important it is for you to fulfil the following needs in your relationship. Rate the importance of these needs for YOU on a scale from 1 to 7.

Needs	Not so important			Very important			
Love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Meaning and value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Closeness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Freedom	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Honesty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Passion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pleasure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Inspiration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being noticed and listened to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. How many of these needs are currently fulfilled in your relationship? Check the correct number:

Needs	Not so important			nt	Very important			
Love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Meaning and value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Closeness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Freedom	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Honesty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Passion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Pleasure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Inspiration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Being noticed and listened to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Other	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Source: Based on: Larsson, 2011.

- Compare the results of both charts and note the differences
   if there are any.
- 2. Which of the above listed needs are most fulfilled in your relationship?
- 3. Did you tell your partner about them?
- 4. Which of your needs are fulfilled least in your relationship? Do you have any requests you would like to ask of your partner?
- 5. Would you be open to requests made by your partner?

If the answer to these questions is YES, then you just took the first step on the path of managing conflict in a relationship. The fundamental tool here is talking, based on the willingness to negotiate with your partner in a way which enables both parties to meet their needs. Of course only to some extent – it must be doable and genuine. It would be great if both partners did this exercise – it can be the starting point of an important talk and can give a start to important family negotiations.

When we negotiate needs and expectations together, it is worth remembering about a few important truths about relationships and communicating (Non Violent communication, NVC, Larson, 2011).

NEGOTIATING THE NEEDS

- 1) We all have the same needs and conflicts usually do not arise from people having needs, but are brought on by people going differently about meeting their needs.
- 2) Everybody's needs are important if you let the other party know that their needs are important, you increase the probability that your needs will also be understood and respected.
- 3) Feelings tell you, what you need they are important feedback in telling you if your needs are being fulfilled so when you analyse a situation it is good to separate what you think about it from the emotions it has evoked in you.
- 4) We act on our needs to fulfil them. The question is: do we generally choose the best strategy given the situation we are in?

Emotional tension can be a sign of unfulfilled needs. It is worth stopping for a moment and trying to name the need which made us feel tense because it has not been fulfilled.



# When you define the source of conflict, you have arguments...

If we know which needs are met in our relationship, and which still need to be met, and if we know how we usually react to conflict, and if we have also assessed which strategy will be best for our relationship in a given situation, another question arises. What is currently the cause of our dispute – that is, what is it exactly that we would like to change?

## CIRCLE OF CONFLICT

The Circle of Conflict created by American mediator, Christopher W. Moore (2009) may be a useful method to determine this. He distinguished five potential sources of conflict and thereby five types of conflict: a data conflict, a relationship conflict, a conflict of values, a structural conflict and a conflict of interests. A single conflict situation may have a few causes. And when the conflict intensifies, new issues are often added to the initial cause.

## CONFLICT OF DATA

A data conflict appears when the parties involved in a conflict do not possess all the necessary data, they have different data or interpret it differently. This may intensify the conflict, especially when the parties blame each other for withholding important information or for intentional deception. A data conflict appears when the misunderstanding comes from the misinterpretation of data or bad timing of data delivery. The example with a request for tea mentioned above may serve as an example of a data conflict – after the person

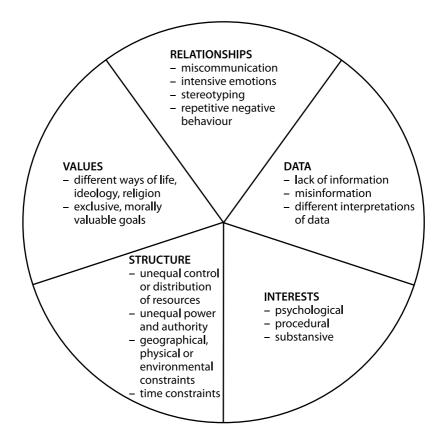


Fig. 1. Circle of conflict

Source: Based on: Moore, 2003.

on the couch hears NO, he or she may feel hurt and can accuse their partner of selfishness, which can trigger a conflict that will quickly snowball out of control. The irony of the situation is that it is entirely possible that our partner declined our request for a cup of tea only because they were in the middle preparing us a cup of mulled wine. The same applies to the situation described at the beginning of this chapter – Agnes thinks Andrew is fast asleep, while Andrew is wide-awake and ready to help her out if she is to request his help at any time.

A relationship conflict is connected with strong, difficult emotions present in our relationship with a given person. It may appear even when there are no real reasons for conflict. Stereotypes, mutual prejudice or bad communication may all serve RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

as valid reasons. This conflict feeds off uncommunicated needs of both parties. This leads to communication break-down between partners – as a result, both partners hold grudges against each other and are often prejudiced in their partner's disfavour. This case is often manifested by distrust and lack of willingness to communicate openly with each other – I cannot trust you therefore I do not say anything and avoid integration altogether, or I bristle when you approach me. The example mentioned at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the issue well: lack of communication between Agnes and Andrew regarding their needs resulted in every single conversation turning into an argument.

## CONFLICT OF VALUES

A conflict of values arises from different value systems, different world views, but also from different attitudes towards every day activities, like parenting or our opinion on women's right to a career. A conflict of values is one of the hardest to resolve because it refers to the values and moral codes of each partner. If one person values the tradition of 'divide and conquer' in a marriage whereby women are supposed to be stay-at-home mums and take care of children and men are supposed to be the breadwinners, whilst the other person feels that both men and women can and for that matter should participate in childrearing it is extremely difficult to combine these two ideas of marriage in a shared living space unless one partner surrenders to the world view of the other.

## STRUCTURAL CONFLICT

A structural conflict arises from the structure of a situation: limited resources (depending on context, e.g. access to phone), performed roles, time limitations (there are only 24 hours in a day; we have to work on average at least 8 hours a day and, maybe the other person has to do overtime). This type is practically independent of people. If our social roles personal space or time-consuming work – (e.g. if our partner lives in a different time zone) – then the very structure of such a long-distance relationship may be the source of conflict because it hinders normal communication.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

A conflict of interests is connected to the inability to fulfil our needs and to achieve our goals. There are three kinds of interests: 1) material interests: money, time, time division (I want you to earn more); 2) procedural interests: the way people talk and

negotiate (I want us to regularly talk about our relationship); 3) psychological interests: feelings of safety, dignity, respect (I want you to respect me and share duties with me). It is important to notice that material needs are often strictly connected with psychological needs – if money is tight then this may cause us to feel unsafe and therefore our need for security is not met.

#### Real life

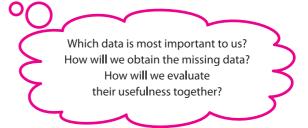
Each of the mentioned conflict sources may be contained in conflict. Let us take an example: Anna, 28, two children (3 and 5), both she and her husband work. Children attend kindergarten but sometimes grandma – Anna's mother-in-law – invites the kids to her house. At grandma's place, the kids, often until late afternoon, play in the same room where grandma watches TV – various programmes and series, which – according to Anna – are not suitable for small children. This causes a lot of friction between Anna, her husband and her mother-in-law.

Using the Circle of Conflict described above we can diagnose 5 different types of problems. We have an example of a conflict of values here - according to Anna small children should not watch R-rated scenes (aggression, sex, violence) on TV because such content may adversely affect their mood and lead to anxiety disorders e.g. difficulty falling asleep or recurring nightmares. However according to Anna's mother in law, the sooner children realize that life is tough the better off they will be. If we perceive the conflict this way we will not be able to resolve it because this is a value-driven conflict – both parties hold strong values which are mutually exclusive – thereby trying to reach a consensus when it comes to values is doomed However. one can also describe this conflict as a data conflict. Perhaps Anna's mother in law is not aware of the fact that violent content negatively affects children. Perhaps if Anna informed her mother-in-law about these research findings her mother in-law would switch the TV off when the kids were in the room. Finally, we can look at this conflict from the point of view of interests. The mother's need is that her children do not watch potentially inappropriate content on TV; whereas grandma wants to prepare them for the hardships of life, which is not necessarily the mother's need. Perhaps they can work together on a solution, which would allow grandma to fulfil her need in some way or HOW TO DEFINE THE PROBLEM?

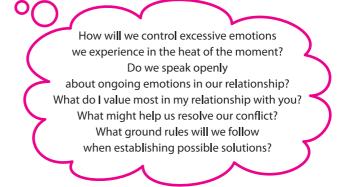
another. Another example within the relationship conflict: the mother does not trust her mother in law. She thinks she is undermining her authority. And the structure conflict: what is the problem in this situation, in this structure? The fact that there is a TV in the room where children play. Perhaps it would be a good idea if they played in another room.

Deciding on the source of conflict brings different solutions, and different questions worth asking each other. Here are examples of questions you can ask when trying to resolve a conflict, depending on the source.

#### In case of a data conflict



## In case of a relationship conflict



#### In case of a conflict of interests

What do we care about the most?
What does the other person want?
How can we bring our needs together?
Am I ready to give up
something and if so, what?
How can we expand
the resources we possess?

## In case of a structural conflict

Which roles and tasks limit us?
To what extent does the evaluation
of the situation depend on us?
How will we make decisions in the current situation?
How can we benefit from this situation?
How can we change the conditions of this situation
to make the problem less annoying?

#### In case of a conflict of values

How to define the problem
other than in terms of values?
Do we give ourselves the right
to disagree with each other?
Which aspects of our life
are influenced by these values?
Which aspects – if any – are not?
Is there any superior goal we both want to achieve?

It is important to name these needs very precisely.

# Specific goals in conflict resolution, although difficult to achieve, can make our lives easier...

## SPECIFY YOUR GOALS

Disputes are supposed to improve both our own and our partner's situation. Therefore it is important to be fully aware of the goal of the negotiations we hold with our partner. In other words: to negotiate effectively we must know what it is we want. Perhaps it sounds technical, but knowing exactly what you care about the most may facilitate clear and straightforward communication in difficult situations. What we want to express should be:

- specific and formulated clearly e.g. "I would like you to take over all the duties related to taking care of Kate and Marty this week";
- precise e.g. "I want us to make dinner in turns I would like you to do it on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and I will do it on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and then next week we will switch";
- doable e.g. "I would like to have one evening a week to myself so that I can go to the gym (instead of taking care of our 2 kids 5 days a week");
- 4) measurable e.g. "I can wait two more minutes for you, then I have to go home";
- 5) formulated in a positive manner think about what you want, what you can do, what you need, what you don't want, what you cannot do and what you can, e.g. "I would very much like us to share chores and in effect have more time for each other in the evening" (instead of "I would like you to stop being lazy and get round to doing some household chores" as such statements are likely to escalate tension).

## HAVING ALTERNATIVE

Let us not forget about alternative goals. Alternative goals are compromises both we and our partners are willing to accept. It is a position, fixed beforehand, we can retreat to. We want our interlocutor to start saying "yes" instead of "no" – "All right, what can you do instead of taking care of Kate and Marty? The kitchen shift?"

Why is it important to clarify these? Because fulfilling these conditions requires asking ourselves questions. And looking for answers improves our self-awareness and encourages us to reflect on these matters. It helps to "put yourself in someone's place."

## An exercise for You

What goal would you like to achieve? Write down the goals you want to reach. Check each other's answers to see if they meet the conditions described above.

**EXERCISE** 



His important goal	Her important goal			

# Nobody is perfect... Let us not forget about our own limitations and biases...

Before we start on the talking with our partner it is worth giving kind of self-self-examination a go. Being human we all have certain limitations and they will significantly influence our understanding of any situation. Important limitations in conflict solving are our own biased opinions present in the way we perceive ourselves and other people. They arise from the human need to take shortcuts, to make a situation easier and to protect our self-image.

Some of the significant barriers to effective communication in conflict resolution are: searching for someone to blame and dealing with emotions. We need to know people's intentions and reasons why they behave the way they do, especially in the

CHALLENGES
OF EFFECTIVE
CONFLICT
RESOLUTION
TECHNIQUES

case of loved ones, because it makes them more predictable to us and thus they become familiar to us and we feel closer to them. We also want to know how to react well in interactions with them (Weiner, 1995). When evaluating the reasons behind people's behaviour - e.g. as in the case of the husband who came home late from work several times in a row – we analyse if the reason was external (traffic jams) or internal (he did not try hard enough to finish his work on time), and next, if he was in control of the cause (if he could have left work earlier in order to avoid traffic iams). These are the crucial criteria that have to be met for the positive resolution of a conflict because they influence the emotions we feel when evaluating the behaviour of another person. If the reason for being late was totally under the husband's control – he could easily have left work on time and thereby avoided traffic jams, but he chatted with his workmate instead – it will make us angry. And this, again, influences our behaviour - we are mad at someone that he/ she did not try hard enough and consequently we expect them to change their behaviour (Weinder, 1995).

BE CAREFUL WITH ATTRIBUTIONS

Anger which results from attributing someone else's behaviour to motives they could have influenced often evokes revengeful or harmful responses (Allred, 1999). That is why it is important to check first, why the person behaved this way (and analyse possible alternative scenarios – traffic jams, the boss wanting something to be done at the last minute), then experiencing / identifying emotions (I am sorry he did not make it on time and hence we were not able to eat dinner together) and only then acting on them (in the future I will ask him to leave work on time) in order to resolve the conflict that has arisen. It is also worth remembering that we attribute our own mistakes to external factors, whereas we attribute other people's mistakes to internal factors (we are late because of traffic jams whereas others just do not try hard enough to be on time).

Research (i.a. Sillars, 1982) indicates that in relationships with a high level of tension or discontent, people attribute their partner's negative behaviour to internal factors which the partner has control over, whilst they attribute their positive behaviours to external factors, which are out of their partner's control – hence these people experience negative emotions towards each other more often and experience greater difficulties

when resolving conflicts. On the other hand, happily partnered couples do not perceive each other in such a negative light they attribute their partner's negative behaviour to external factors (e.g. traffic jams, a bad mood), and positive behaviour to internal factors (he tried hard, he loves me). As a result they mostly experience positive emotions towards each other; and thereby often express gratitude and appreciation for their partner. What is more, if they do run into problems they are very effective at resolving conflicts. In unhappy relationships partners are deliberately negatively biased towards each other because they both want to retaliate for past events which they have never talked-over properly. In happy relationships, on the other hand, partners are intentionally nice to each other (Sillars, 1982). Thomas Bradbury and Frank Fincham (1990) have shown in their research that it is the act of attributing negative intentions to others that triggers negative emotions and the need to take revenge on our partner. It also leads to difficult and very fierce disputes.

Therefore it is important to assume our partner's positive intentions and to be honest in ours... But it is not always so because we often prefer to play games...



## Oh the games couples play...

## COMMUNICATION GAMES

Communicating is no small feat for couples. Everyone has their vision of reality and everybody has something to communicate. Very often, we feel we know better than our partner. We are right, they are not. Period. So we get into a fight to get our partner to admit that we are indeed right. We resort to various modes of persuasion in doing so, often without being open about our agenda – sometimes because we do not know ourselves, sometimes because of communication games as little tricks we use to convince others that we are right about something are very easy to use. At least at face value. In this part of the chapter we will focus on the games couples play and how people struggle when communicating with others by playing the role of a parent or child in their relationships.

## Who is the parent, who is the child?

ADULT CHILDREN

According to E. Berne (2007), playing the role of the child in communication means provoking others to take a caring attitude towards us. It also communicates that we give up the responsibility for our actions and we give in to others. Of course "adult children" - like actual children - adopt various attitudes, but the former choose to resign from what is every child's greatest dream: being autonomous and independent. Adult children's reaction to the "parent attitude" their behaviour evokes in others varies. Some remain silent; some express "childish discontent" and/or rebel against others while not expressing the need to transcend the existing pattern of communication. They want to perceive their partners as the good or bad cop. Looking for a parent in communication with others also suggest that probably the universal human need for "stroking" has not been fully fulfilled in an individual and he or she has low self-esteem and a low sense of agency. Therefore surrogate "parents" are needed to fulfil the need to be recognised as a significant other who is taken care of, who is loved, and whose antics and pranks are forever tolerated. People with a dominant inner child attitude search for such forms of social relations where the factor of play and pleasure dominates, and where there is no need to take responsibility for their words or actions.

PARTNER OR PARENT?

In contrast, parent-personality types, will aim to take care of others, advise them, show them the paths they need to follow, which is gladly accepted by the "children"; whereas for real adults such an attitude may be a source of great discomfort. In a parent relationship it is assumed that the child is not yet ready to make independent and unassisted decisions it has to be told what to do or someone must make decisions for them or even take action in their name. Parents receive a prize for taking care of their children, for fulfilling the child's needs, managing its path, helping it grow as a person, which all requires dedicating time and effort and – often – sacrificing one's own needs. In return for this kind of sacrifice the parent has the right to expect not just respect and gratitude from the child, but also obedience. This aspect is especially important in the authoritarian parenting style. In a paternalistic model, the parent expects trust and obedience in return for care and support offered to the child.

> PARENTING STYLE

What is more important though is that people who identify with their inner parent in communication with others will seldom allow for a model of partnership exchange or discussion. They will feel responsible for the course of the whole interaction, they will force their opinions on others, they will not let others speak too often nor will they care about other people's opinions too much. All they care about is their own perception of a situation and their own agenda when communicating with others. On the other hand, there is another version of 'parenting style' in adult romantic partnerships, a more dominant one, expressing constant discontent and constantly undermining their partner's self-esteem. They will do anything to strengthen their position in a relationship by depreciating their partner's position.

GAMES PEOPLE
PLAY

As Berne (2007) noticed, people running away from difficult talks and situations (in relationships as well as other spheres of life) refer to behavioural reactions and patterns rooted in their childhood. Playing the parent or the child protects us from confronting a problem. A situation described by E. Berne may serve as an example of such an escape. If one of the partners asks the other: Do you know where my cuff-links are? and the other replies: You always blame me for everything, then we have a cross transaction: one party wants to change the communication style by provoking the partner to become Parental or Childish. As you can guess, this has nothing to do with those

hapless cuff-links at all. They have just become an excuse for one partner to confront the other, which is a more grievous issue present in a relationship from his/ her point of view. What is characteristic though is that he/she does not really aim to resolve the conflict that has just arisen but rather expresses a need to confront the other party. Below we describe a couple of games couples play, using various configurations of being a parent and child in a relationship.

#### If it weren't for You (IIWFY)

SENSE OF GUILT

If it weren't for you is a special game, which can be played by partners in a situation where one of them has "given up" some aspect of their personality or a project in favour of the relationship. Although this decision was usually made consciously, in discussions between partners, it can transform into a grudge or turn into downright blaming. For example, a wife who has decided to be a stay-at-home wife in order to support her husband's life plans (or more likely because she was afraid to take up the challenge of being the breadwinner in the family) may manifest her frustration in such a game, accusing her partner of being completely responsible for her fate, because If it weren't for you I could have had a career and become a famous writer. The IIWFY game can also be played by parents and their children. Playing this game evokes guilt in others – the player who plays in the 'attack' position strives to be more appreciated, to raise her/ his own status in the relationship...

#### Wash the dishes or I will faint

BLACKMAIL

There are a lot of games based on more or less subtle emotional blackmail that partners use against each other. One of the forms of such blackmail is emotional co-dependence – wherein one partner's mood and health status is entirely dependent on other party's behaviour. Some examples of toxic statements often uttered by people who play this game: I will die because of you, You will lead me to my grave, You're hammering another nail in my coffin, I die a little every time you do this, have a great impact the on the recipient's mind, especially if the recipient happens to be a child. Unfortunately, this game is popular with many people. Andrzej Wiśniewski writes: "it is as if somebody (e.g. our mother) uses capital punishment in order to make us

do something they want us to do. People who were at the receiving end of this kind of behaviour when they were children use this bogey in their adult relationships and, for instance, faint hysterically". This game can be played unconsciously, when, for instance, a feeling emerges, a feeling we are afraid to express because our partner's answer may be negative. "I remember a marriage where a wife was always ill to such an extent that the guy had to do everything. She would come home from work, tie a bandana on her head and lay on the couch. I am deeply convinced she was not pretending – she really did suffer from intense headaches and she really was constantly in pain. The underlying cause of these recurring headaches was of course the unbearable tension between the spouses. But the scarf and the headache gave way to a situation which allowed for their co-existence and role-reversal" (K. Grochola, A. Wiśniewski, Martial games and play schemes, p. 127–128).

## Prove that you love me

The game is to challenge the partner. As in some fairy tale scenario he/ she has to overcome difficulties to win the heart of the beloved. Accomplishing the task is taken as proof that our partner's declaration of love is true. This kind of conditioning happens to people who did not experience unconditional love from their parents (*Daddy loves you because you got an A at school, because you scored a goal, because you took the dog for a walk*). In this situation children do not know if they will be loved if they do something that exceeds their parents' expectations or does not match them. Their actions are aimed at checking whether their loved ones genuinely love them because they are not sure if their feelings are for real. For this personality type even punishment is better than indifference. Those people tend to demand proof of love from loved ones as adults.

## If you really loved me you would know

Another very destructive script, quite popular in intimate relationships, is the one where one partner in a relationship assumes that if someone truly loves another they should understand them like no one else. Therefore, he/ she should be able to instantly recognise our desires and fulfil them, much like a parent recognises the needs of a child and is able to fulfil **CHALLENGES** 

MIND-READING

them without fail. The truth is though that this is expectation is unrealistic because hardly anyone has the ability to read people's minds. It is just another script we get with cultural notions about romantic love, which is supposed to link lovers by means of a magical bond of supernatural understanding. In reality, the ability to sense the need of our partner without them expressing it is actually simply the result of mindfulness and partners being very in tune with each other. The If you loved me you would know game undermines the romantic, emotional foundations of a relationship. It accusatory in its nature – the partner is informed that he/ she does not fulfil the hopes and expectations we have placed in him/her. This kind of game brings anxiety and lack of acceptance to the relationship. It is one of the most destructive games partners can get involved in. Like the previous game, this game also arises from the fear of one partner who is deeply afraid to express their feelings, desires and expectations towards his or her relationship and/or partner. The accused partner rightfully holds a grudge over being accused of lacking feelings towards their partner but to the eyes of the accuser their less than loving behaviour is just 'proof' of their lack of feelings. As a result, partners drift away from each other. Perhaps after this staged "rejection" tension will ensue which might make sparks fly again – this is what the initiating partner in the "if you loved me" game hopes for.

## An exercise for You

## **EXERCISE**



Sit together (the two of you) and talk. Talk about whatever you want, e.g. tell each other about your day. However, be mindful of one thing: one of you should listen actively, the other should talk, then you should switch roles. Know that active listening assumes that you:

- 1) maintain eye contact with the other person;
- make use of paraphrasing, ask open and closed questions;
- 3) give the other person your full attention;
- 4) do not play with anything, you only listen!

## **Emphatic couple**

Empathy is essential if you want to avoid communication games and create satisfying relationships with others. Empathy is is the ability to understand and participate in the emotional states of other people (Davis, 1999). We exhibit empathy when we notice that someone is experiencing some kind of emotion, e.g. sorrow, and we share this person's sorrow due to his/her situation. Empathy concerns sharing others' emotions, both difficult and pleasant. Therefore we can share the joy of our friend's success, but also the fear of someone who is afraid. On a neurological level, mirror neurons take part in the process of empathetic reaction formation. They work as a mirror letting us reflect on other people's emotional experiences. Empathy is, in a sense, an inbuilt human tool – the behaviour of infants who react with crying to other infant's crying suggests just that. We can say we have, as it were, a congenital ability to adjust to other people's emotions. However it turns out that the mature form of empathy requires a deliberate effort.

WHAT IS EMPATHY

cult if we consider the fact that it requires re-focusing our attention from ourselves to other people. First and foremost, an empathetic response requires "putting aside" our own stories which usually absorb us the most. Thus an authentic meeting with another person, who has his or her own emotions and needs, is made possible. Secondly, empathy as a process of "entering another's skin" rejects judgement and initial assumptions about what we think we know. Such a meeting – free of judgement and set pre-assumptions – is exceptionally hard to achieve with our loved ones, e.g. with our partner. For in a partner relationship we often use old and worn-out schemes about what she/ he usually does, how he/she always reacts, how she/ he would never act (to our knowledge of them), who he/ she is. The problem is, most of the time we have already passed judgement on a person and/or situation before we even realize it. Thus, the goal is not to eradicate all evaluations and judgements (which is

Activating our natural, innate ability to empathize may be diffi-

BECOMING EMPHATIC

But we have yet to ask the most important question: how then ought we empathize with others? How can we activate our abil-

impossible in itself) but rather to be aware of them so as not to

let them dominate the way we interact with somebody.

ity to empathize? One can say we need not do anything really as we as a species empathize spontaneously, automatically. We do not have to take any particular steps to feel e.g. sad when our partner is sad. It is only natural that we share the emotional states of our loved ones. But what do we do with this experience is another thing altogether. We have all experienced moments when we ourselves, or our loved ones have uttered the following words: Don't worry, everything is going to be ok or This is really awful. I am very sorry for you. If I were you... or I understand you do not feel well but wallowing in sadness won't help you. You have to pull yourself together. These examples of "sound advice" in response to someone's sorrow are surely not empathetic. Instead we can offer people in need our kind attention, which is always the result of emotionally engaged listening. Jac Jakubowski writes about "developing a spontaneous empathetic response" (Jakubowski, 2004). Contrary to common belief, it is not a matter of correct forms communication, but rather about giving the other person your undivided attention. It is is giving others this 'kind' attention that allows us to develop our innate ability to empathize with others.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Empathy enables us to build an intimate relationship with another person where we **hear** each other, and this in turn translates into a better understanding of our partner's needs, which are often very different from ours. By using our natural ability to empathize we can really get to know ourselves and also confront our partner's real needs and intentions. It is much easier to negotiate everyday reality together in such a situation. But this calls for favouring open and direct communication over silly games.

## **Summary**

It is important for Work-Life-Balance to be our shared goal.

## CONFLICTS ARE

In this chapter we wanted to show you that it is important to treat conflicts in a relationship as something beneficial – as a transition phase – which allows partners to grow in a relationship and for the relationship itself to develop for the better. But if we want conflicts to bring a change for the better in our lives

and allow us to achieve work-life balance we must set and follow some important ground rules.

Partnership principles serving WLB (based on: Deutsch, 2005).

- 1) Look at a problem from a distance, look for any instance of mutual understanding and shared goals.
- 2) In case of a lack of mutual understanding focus on the problem and avoid personal attacks
- 3) Try to understand the other party's problems, imagine how you would feel if you were them.
- 4) Make use of the other party's ideas, build an understanding. Listen carefully.
- 5) Emphasise your partner's positive traits and the possibility to resolve the conflict constructively.
- 6) Take responsibility for the negative outcomes of your actions and words – do not blame others, focus on the possibilities to make things up to your partner, and if necessary apologise sincerely.
- 7) If the other party has hurt you, be ready to forgive, but only if they take responsibility for the harm they have done you and sincerely apologise. Look out for opportunities to reconcile, do not hold grudges.
- 8) Notice the needs of your partner
- 9) Be honest so that you can build real intimacy in a relationship
- 10) Aim for reciprocity and equality in line with the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".
- 11) Give yourself and the other person the right to make mistakes and hold erroneous opinions.
- 12) Do not resort to violence physical or mental. It hurts loved ones and affects their sense of self-worth. Coercion and violence may temporarily result in somebody adopting a submissive position but will not permanently change anyone's behaviour.

... Agnes and Andrew sat and talked. Andrew said he yearned for more freedom when taking care of their child, and that he would love for Agnes to support him in a way that would allow him to do things his own way even if she herself would do them differently (he expressed this need in a SMART way). He also showed appreciation for the fact that Agnes does such a good job caring for the baby and the house while maintaining a demanding career. Agnes stated that she would gladly hand over more than a few chores to Andrew and said she would refrain from critical comments she has (up to now) routinely uttered when he took care of their child or performed household chores. She was very willing to make all these changes as she loves it when he cooks and feels he is better at playing with their baby.

They agreed to share certain household chores during the week – depending on their work schedules – the person with a lighter workload during a given week would co-ordinate the performance of household duties and would assign certain tasks to the other. They also agreed that they would take turns at getting up when the baby cries at night – one night Agnes would have the 'night shift', the next night it would be Andrew's turn. They also decided that they would try to find a way to make their one year old sleep through the night – in order to do so they would research different approaches to the problem and then choose the one they both agree on.

Finally they decided to get a part-time baby-sitter for one day a week. They would go to the cinema together in less than a week from now. And they would spend 3 hours together. Just the two of them.

THE END © And they lived happily ever after despite enduring countless more conflicts! And it was ok.

## **Recommended reading**

Berne E. (1996), *Games People Play: The Basic Handbook of Transactional Analysis*, Ballantine Books, New York.

Rosenberg M.B. (2003), *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life,* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Puddle Duncer Press.

Moore W.C. (2014), The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Jossey-Bass, New York.

## **Chapter 3**

# A couple in the wash, breaking gender stereotypes



"You didn't put your dirty jeans in the laundry basket! Again!!! Do you really think I am your mother to clean up your dirty laundry for you?" – Kate talks to Michael this way at least once a week. By now Michael is accustomed to her yelling. He knows his partner will do his laundry for him. Soon he will find his jeans in the wardrobe, clean and neatly folded. Admittedly, he does not like them ironed, but oh well, it is better not to annoy Kate. One day she will probably get really mad and stop doing the laundry. It has happened once before. He had to go shopping to buy new underwear. But most likely she will continue to whine about his dirty clothes scattered everywhere but will continue to do his laundry. After all, he knows nothing about washing machines. All those powders, softeners, colour segregation, temperatures, why does it have to be so complicated?

## **Ensnared by stereotypes**

Kate and Michael are a typical Polish couple (they have been together for 3 years, they have no children) who have divided household chores between them by means of the survival method: "Who will be able to endure discomfort longer?" Such contests are usually won by men. Why does it happen? Is it possible to change this? Why bother? We will talk about it in the following chapter.

Stereotypes are very strong and resistant to change beliefs. They are born slowly and changing them also takes a lot of time. They are a part of our collective consciousness: agreeing with them makes us feel like members of a group, a community. They often confirm we have done something right, e.g. "like a real man". They are rooted in our unconsciousness and strongly connected with our emotional life. When someone questions them, e.g. a wife or a partner states all of a sudden: "I won't do the laundry anymore, you will do the laundry, starting today!", it does not match the strong stereotype of woman who cares about cleanliness and family, and who has "natural" and "congenital" domestic skills. Even if we do not share such an opinion on a conscious level, behaviour which is not in line with a given stereotype evokes emotions in us, negative emotions. We often experience tension, fear and anger, not to mention surprise. It depends on how the suggested change will affect us and what others will think of us. We experience a sense of inconsistency. The woman wants to act like a non-woman? And the man? "They don't want to the laundry but they won't pump gas at a gas station either!". Thus, change-related resistance occurs. What is going to change? To what extent? Who will gain, who will lose? We want to share duties, but how will we make sure that this new and unorthodox division of chores will be fair? And are these changes really reasonable?

# DID YOU KNOW... On most Polish families, only women perform the following chores – ironing (82%), doing the laundry (81%), preparing meals (67%), washing the dishes (58%), regular house cleaning (58%) and big-time house cleaning (54%). (Hipsz, 2013)

The newest social research shows that household chores division influences family life satisfaction. According to Øystein Gullvåg Holter (2015), men actively involved in household chores report being more satisfied with their relationship than men who do not perform household chores.

#### DID YOU KNOW...

Polish immigrants in Norway have more spare time and are happy to be able to combine their professional and family life and achieve work-life balance. As a result they are more involved in household and family duties than they were before they moved.

(Project Par Migration Navigator –

(Project Par Migration Navigator www.migrationnavigator.org)

It is harder for couples to share household chores in Poland than it is in Norway. There are no role models, neither for men - because few men are involved in domestic chores - nor for women. Men who are involved in household chores, try hard not to boast about it. Women are much more likely to complain about the burden of household duties than boast about chore division. in their households. Women often talk about their husbands or partners in terms of "enforced help". A deeply rooted negative attitude towards men involved in doing "feminine" chores is one of the reasons for this (this is also indicated by our research: Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2015). Apart from the hard work men have to do to learn the ins and outs of household chores. they are also exposed to criticism from other men who do not feel like involving themselves in household chores and/or do not think they should. The examples of couples living in Norway (both Polish and Norwegian) indicate it is easier to get involved in household duties if we frequently come across role models in our social environment: "I do not know any Norwegians (males)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Qualitative research on couples in Tricity (carried out by the Author of this Chapter in 2009–2010) confirm it, as well as interviews with couples within Par Migration Navigator project set up in Tricity every year (since 2014).

who do not know how to change diapers or prepare a meal for their baby" – Polish respondents from Stavanger say.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the women who try to make their partners more involved in household chores – and therefore hand over responsibility over some duties to their partners – admit they feel bad about not performing all these "feminine" duties themselves instead of enjoying the achieved work-life balance. They feel they have become less "feminine" in the eyes of others. Couples living in Norway do not treat the issue of domestic chores as something that validates or invalidates their masculinity or femininity. They only see it as a set of tasks that have to be done and – in the case of dual career families<sup>3</sup> – fairly divided. Of course we all admit there are difficulties we encounter when making this "division". The richer a couple's life is in family related events the more their relationship grows and the more opportunities they have to redeem themselves, change their behaviour and negotiate issues with each other.

# A thing or two about domestic minimalism and how women guard the kitchen door or the "I will wait until you deal with it..." stance

Everything begins right at the beginning of the relationship, in the couple's forming phase. In the first homes they share, couples put as little time and energy as possible into doing the laundry, cleaning the house and washing the dishes. Some people still make use of their mother's willingness to help out. Some don't mind living in an unkempt living space, their standards are pretty low and they are not particularly keen on neatness or cleanliness; they say life is great this way. Others use disposable products, especially dishes, cutlery, napkins or tablecloths. We can sense a strategy here – they try to 'do as little as possible' so as not to get stuck with a given duty forever.

That is exactly how Michael, Kate's partner, acts. In their relationship it was Kate who was eager to choose and buy a washing machine. Since she seems to always remember to buy the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A quote from Par Migration Navigator research.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A dual career family – that is how we name a family where both partners work.

washing powder and fabric softener – well, you could say she seems to enjoy doing it otherwise she wouldn't bother, right? Michael prefers not to interfere with her space. He did do the laundry once but it turned out he set the temperature too high and they had to throw all the clothes away. Besides, Michael does not have many clothes whereas Kate has loads of them so it seems only logical that he does not involve himself in doing the laundry.

Kate does all the laundry and she does not remember how this came to be. She also hangs it up and irons it. She does not like to do it. It is a Sisyphean, never-ending task. Still, she cannot stop ironing nor can she bring herself to drop her clothes off at the dry cleaner's. She considers doing the laundry and ironing a wife's task. These things just need to be done. There was actually less laundry to be done at the beginning of their relationship. Perhaps Michael washed his jeans less often. Perhaps his mother was willing to iron his shirts. And then at some point Kate realised it was all up to her. The division of chores in their home had become a reality. The 'feminine' chores were somehow seen as hers and the 'masculine' as Michael's, perfectly in line with stereotypes.

# Tell me how you do the laundry and I will tell you what kind of a couple you are4

Let us take a look at the chore of doing the laundry as a whole. It is a perfect example to illustrate at least two things – firstly, the changes referring to household chore division which sprout from technological development, secondly, the chance to grow as a person and negotiate household chore division. 5 Struggling with household chores tells us a lot about the relationship of two people.

Jean-Claude Kaufmann answers the question when does a couple form with these words: "Tell me where you do your laundry and I will tell you whether you are a couple" (KaufWHAT IS A COUPLE

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> J.-C. Kaufmann's statement paraphrase: "Tell me how you do the laundry and I will tell you if you are a couple already (Kaufmann, 1992, p. 69) <sup>5</sup> Watch the film: http://www.ted.com/talks/hans\_rosling\_and\_the\_magic\_washing\_machine (accessed: 15.12.2015).

mann, 1995, p. 69). According to Kaufmann, buying a washing machine is an important event, a breakthrough in a couple's relations. Why? Because this decision is not always thoroughly thought through. It is also not always the most appropriate step to take for a given couple in the current phase of their relationship. It may just be that a couple buys a washing machine together but continues to have separate laundry baskets and partners only wash their own clothes when they do the laundry. The same goes for hanging up freshly laundered clothes and ironing them. Kaufmann recalls a couple just like this – "They did the laundry together in *their* washing machine, but all the things that needed to be done by hand, they would do separately, so their clothes only 'met' inside the washing machine. They weren't much of a couple..." (Kaufmann, 1995, p. 70).

## BECOMING A COUPLE

We enter a relationship without any cut-and-dried ideas referring to the roles we are supposed to play (husband, wife, partner, housewife, househusband, and then mother and father). When we gradually construct our mutual world we often have not yet realised who we are and what we are supposed to do. It is because of the great social changes we are witnessing. Everything has become negotiable; it is possible to accept every solution – at least in theory. We are aware that times are changing. Suddenly we are faced with the task of starting a family: we have to build a stable relationship between (at least) two people. So we look for role models to emulate and it occurs to us that even when it comes to such a petty thing as dividing household chores there is no booklet of instructions, no manual we can readily make use of.

To divide household chores in a way that suits our own needs and those of our partner it is worth going back to the beginning of our relationship. Scientists from the Gottman Institute have shown that the way a couple recalls their first meeting is a very good predictor of how long they will stay together. John M. Gottman, a psychologist and a psychotherapist, the author of *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* invited 95 newlywed couples to take part in one of his experiments. He asked them how they met. He recorded the stories of each and every spouse and kept them for further analysis. Every year for the following 9 years he asked the spouses to repeat the story of their first meeting. Af-

ter 9 years, 79 of those couples were still together. The researchers had correctly predicted the fate of 68 out of the 79 couples that took part in the study. How? Based on the fact that those couples who were heading for divorce began to recall their first meeting as less and less pleasant as the years went by.

The beginnings of a relationship are usually wonderful; at least we perceive them this way. The years pass and if our marriage is happy, we still paint a rosy picture of the past. But if a relationship is done, only negative aspects of those early days come to mind when we reminisce.

That is why we recommend you give this exercise a go.

## Observing your partner

During the next week or two try to treat your partner as if you have just met. Imagine you have suddenly found yourselves in a new home, as roommates who do not know each other and have never lived together. Ask for advice, opinions, and remarks, ask about their life. Listen carefully, do not interrupt. Look at your partner closely as if you have just met for the first time – observe his/ her face, eyes, hands, the way they move, their clothes. What does she/ he do at home? What is pleasant for him/ her? What does she/ he not like to do? Write down your observations (Kohle, Riess 2012, p. 29, 118).

After a week, sit together (arrange this meeting beforehand) and talk about this task honestly. Try to focus on positive things: what did you find fascinating about the other person during this week? What did you like about his/ her lifestyle? Which new thing caught your attention, preferably a thing you had not noticed before? Why do you fancy each other? Give each lots of time to talk through the whole experience.

# What do I get from this? Do I invest too much in a relationship?

Unjust division of household chores is a common issue these days. On the one hand, nobody imposes strict, gender-dependent behavioural patterns on us – we can always negotiate things in our relationship and exert influence over areas,

EXERCISE



which are fraught with gender stereotypes, such as cleaning the house. On the other hand, gender influences our attitude to household chores, our standards, expectations and needs. Research by Kaufmann indicates that couples are entangled in a web of traditional roles and habits to a really great extent, an unprecedented extent. The author explains: "Due to the lack of functional, modern-day roles, couples perceive roles socially 'inherited'from parents as ones worth following" (Kaufmann 1995, p. 110). Therefore, most couples are very quick to set some basic ground rules when they move in together and they do this without discussing their preferences, expectations or needs with their partners. The nature of household duties enables such a turn of events. On the one hand, it is quicker and easier to divide chores this 'natural' way because we willingly go for those chores in the house which we find easier to do than others and those which we perceive as less unpleasant than others (Kaufmann 1995, p. 113). This way, household tasks and duties are mostly passed on and reconstructed in line with feminine and masculine stereotypes, much less as a result of negotiating and reaching a consensus about what should be yours and what should be mine. Lack of direct communication when it comes to household results in an exchange game (compare Chapter 2): "something for something" – because the account must break even.

Kate and Michael only discuss the issue of chore division between the lines, amongst friends or in their thoughts. "He is free to go on a trip with his mates when he mows the lawn and buys a new laundry dryer" – Kate not so jokingly blackmails Michael and seemingly shows him who the boss is in their house in front of their friends. Illusory power is the prize she claims for the effort she puts in doing the laundry and ironing. "I've had it! Is it really so difficult to take those dirty underpants to the bathroom?". That's what she says. "Ok, she can yell as long as she pleases. I give her three days. I'll bet you good money I will have my socks washed before the week is over." – that is what he thinks. Kate does however take her revenge on Michael: "If he does not give a damn, I won't iron his T-shirts.

How about putting our natural love of games to good use – try this Swedish game which offers the opportunity to set some

ground rules in our relationship and the chance to win some real prizes. The game is called Komma Lika.<sup>6</sup>

### Komma Lika

Prepare triangles cut out from sticky or magnetic paper. They can be of different sizes. Each person chooses a colour (you can do this exercise with children – if you decide to do so add extra colours) and a certain number of triangles of different sizes – e.g. 5 very large, 15 medium and 25 little triangles. The rules of the game are very simple – when you perform a household chore you stick one triangle on the door of the fridge – its size should correspond to the effort you put in the chore and the time it took you to complete it. Gradually you and your partner (or family) will compose a colourful picture together. If there are not enough triangles, cut out new ones. The colours represent the involvement of each person in household chores. Introduce competition to your daily life and remember to reward yourself and others with good prizes.

ШП

**EXERCISE** 

Questions to ponder and talk over with your partner: What should you do to have as many of your own triangles on the fridge as possible? Why do the disparities seem to appear? What could you do to even out the number of colours in the picture?

### Can you learn to do the laundry?<sup>7</sup>

Doing the laundry will serve as an example of a duty that can be learnt and put in the schedule of chores to be done. In the analysis of the laundry chore and the ability to learn how to do it properly we will use a concept originated by David Kolb. It refers to how adults learn (see Kolb, 1984). Kolb divides competence into four levels with respect to our level of awareness and illustrates them with the example of learning to drive a car. The first level is **unconscious incompetence**. The individual does not understand or know how to do something and does

UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokieobcasy/1,80530,14515896,\_Komma\_ Lika\_\_\_\_zagraj\_w\_rownouprawnienie\_\_Kazdy\_chce.html (accessed: 15.12.2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Watch the washing powder ad "Share the laundry", which turned out to be a public service advertising: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqlrTGd1lmw (accessed: 15.12.2015).

CONSCIOUS

CONSCIOUS

UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE mind of a person who does not realise that laundry needs to be done, and therefore is not interested where clean clothes come from. The second level is conscious incompetence. Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize the deficit, as well as the value of a new skill in addressing the deficit. Making of mistakes can be integral to the learning process at this stage. In the example by Kolb it is a level of knowing what driving a car consists of, but not being able to imagine we ourselves could do it. It is equally unavailable to us as the idea of driving a Formula 1 race car or a lorry. When it comes to doing the laundry it will apply to the statement: "I don't know how to do the laundry". The consecutive levels of the learning cycle are: conscious competence and unconscious competence. In the first case, the individual understands or knows how to do something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires concentration. It may be broken down into steps, and there is heavy conscious involvement in executing the new skill a person who attends a driving license course has learned to drive, little by little. Similarly, a person who has just learnt how to do the laundry follows the instructions in the manual every time and controls his/ her actions. It is only at the fourth level that reflection and the need to consciously focus on an action disappear and the task just "gets done". We forget we are driving when we drive a car. When the laundry basket is full, dirty clothes in bright colours are put into the washing machine; a hand sets the correct temperature "automatically", puts the powder in and turns the washing machine on.

not necessarily recognize the deficit. This first level exists when a person has no knowledge what driving a car is and the idea of driving a car does not cross his/ her mind at all. In the case of lack of competence in doing the laundry it is the state of

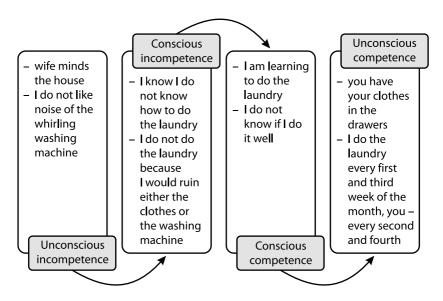


Fig. 2. Developing new competences – doing the laundry

# 1) Doing the laundry as an example of unconscious incompetence

In a traditional relationship based on the divide and conquer principle – "the man earns money and is the breadwinner, the woman brings up children and minds the house", men are on the level of unconscious incompetence as far as household chores are concerned. Unconscious incompetence is characteristic of men in very traditional relationships, who do not care how clean, ironed clothes miraculously appear in their wardrobes on a daily basis. They do not think about it really; when they experience a sudden lack of these items (e.g. during a business trip that lasts longer than they anticipated, when they have lost their luggage or in any other unexpected situation – e.g. when their wife falls ill) they either buy new things or experience a deep shock – they realise they have no idea where to get clean clothes from. There are not too many men like that these days, but the remains of a strong public-domestic division are still present in our lives and mind-sets.

The domestic sphere is still traditionally assigned to women, the public sphere – to men. Some men still try to avoid performing

any household chores. Marcin, the Tricity research respondent, cannot do the laundry and in his interview he presents the first level of non-competence in doing the laundry.<sup>8</sup>

Ola: I like doing the laundry, I mean putting things in the washing machine, I like it. The thing is, I do not like to hang it up – I feel it takes forever and a day. Now that we have a baby daughter I've always got a pile of laundry waiting to be done and I never seem to be done doing it. I do it all the time, over and over again; I have one pile of laundry waiting to be hung up as we speak, another waiting in the washer, another pile of it needs to be folded. And the thing is – I despise folding it and putting it into the wardrobe, it such a Sisyphean task – hanging and folding for what seems like an eternity... Do you [a question addressed to Marcin] like to hang and fold?

Marcin: What, me??? No, no!

[Ola laughs]

Marcin: I don't like it and I don't perform any activities if they demand bending. I can do everything vertically.

Marcin's astonishment sounds quite natural. He does not acknowledge that although he washes the dishes he could also do the laundry. This competence is not for him.

# 2) Doing the laundry as a conscious incompetence

Men can very often be found on the level of conscious incompetence. They realise they cannot do something. Conscious incompetence is knowing full well about our lack of competence, but in the case of household chores it is not linked to feelings of shame. This was exactly the case in several couples we interviewed. In interviews, female partners emphasised their partner's lack of competence and talked about how they were disappointed by their partners' performance of a given household chore.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The quotes come from interviews with couples from Tricity made in 2009–2010, referring to household and parental duties division. Respondents names have been changed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> As above.

Agnieszka: I ask him to hang up the laundry only when I really have to because I know he will do it all wrong and I will have to make adjustments when I come home and will still have to give half of it to Ela (our housemaid) so that she can iron it; and I will be pissed off and all. Once he actually hung up dirty laundry! He took it out of the washer, unwashed. He does not know how to switch the washing machine on, how to programme it. I noticed many people our age have a problem with doing the laundry; many of my colleagues have it.

Maciek: I don't know how to do it but it has never been an issue. When the dishwasher appeared in our house – that was easy, you just load it. The washing machine – there's so much you need to do take into account: colour segregation, spin speeds, I would not know how to tell black items from colour ones. Agnieszka knows it all: the programmes, the spin speeds, the washing powders.

Agnieszka: I give heavily stained clothes to my mum and she washes them for me. They need to be soaked and pre-washed – if I were to do it myself I would probably forget that I need to take all these pre-wash steps before putting the clothes in the wash. I know mum will remember and she will take them out of the washer in time.

Doing the laundry may be the woman's duty as a result of an agreement between partners. If they have agreed that the woman does the laundry, the man is allowed not to know how to do it or have doubts about how to do it, because of the standards set by the woman.

Marta: I am doing the laundry.

Sebastian: I think I did the laundry one time.

Marta: When I left those Post-it notes around for you to read?

Sebastian: Maybe two or three times. And I happen to hang up the laundry every three weeks or so because nowadays you ask me to do it more often than you did before.

Marta: That's because I had to go on a business trip twice I couldn't let the clothes sit in the washer while I was away and I had already run the washing machine. I always set the washing machine in the morning so that when I come back from work, the laundry is done. I actually set it two days in advance and it is great. So there is no problem, I do not waste two hours a day waiting to be able to hang the laundry up, I just come when it is ready, and that is great.

Sebastian: It is not a problem, in other words – if it is her duty, I find clean clothes, freshly ironed in my drawers.

On the level of conscious incompetence, it could happen that a person has some rudimentary knowledge and skills. Men may know how to do the laundry but at the same time they are often afraid to do it because they fear they will not to be able to meet their wives' standards. Therefore, they are often exempted from doing it for this very reason.

Ewa: I usually do the laundry at the weekend, when I am home to hang it up. You know, between the two of us we do not have to do the laundry very often. At times I do not even do it every weekend, but every two weeks – then I do the laundry twice in one day because I wash the bright and dark colours separately.

Przemek: I only use the washing machine to wash my own clothes, some coveralls, if there are Ewa's clothes in the washing machine, I take them out, unwashed. God forbid I wash them wrong! After I'm done I hang up my laundry. But I would not dare to hang up or wash Ewa's laundry – God forbid I mess something up in the process – the temperature or the colours or something else I may not even know about.

Some men who used to do a given chore at some point in their adult lives somehow 'delete' the competence from their memory. Others do it at work (they wash their workwear at work), but they somehow 'can't' do the laundry at home. Others stop doing a given chore when a woman heaves into sight, despite the fact that they had lived on their own for 10 years and were experts at doing the laundry. Bartek (who had been living with Agata for only 5 weeks when the interview took place) admitted that Agata took over doing the laundry when they moved in together and now she does the laundry more often than he ever did "I do not even remember when I last did the laundry". And this is exactly how some men's competence in doing the laundry disappears. Even though in the survey they stated that they share the laundry duty 50/50, chances are Bartek will soon stop doing the laundry altogether.

# 3) Doing the laundry as a conscious competence

The third level of laundry competence characterises about half of the interviewed men. <sup>10</sup> Even if they know how to perform this household chore, they often perform it in a very mindful way. They need to read washing machine manual every single time, they constantly ask questions and even then after they are done perform in the chore they are not sure if they did a good job. This level corresponds with the husband as wife's apprentice condition according to Kaufmann's theory. What is typical is that the male partners often learn how to do the laundry but continue making rookie mistakes and often forget to the laundry for weeks on end. They do not feel pressured to do it every day if they are not directly asked to.

HUSBAND IS HIS WIFE'S STUDENT

Michał: As far as hanging up the laundry goes, I always have to be reminded but I do it.

Sylwia: I do not do it for him, even if I have to remind him twice or more to do it. I simply refuse to do it for him because I know that if I did I would hold a grudge. I am more mentally burdened by the fact that I have to manage the performance of this chore in our house.

Women teach their partners various things in various ways. They have to because, as Rafał admits: "I have received a really good education over the years but nobody ever taught me how to bring up children or how to be a husband".

Therefore, women teach their husbands how to perform various household chores, often by demonstrating how to do things properly and then and expecting their partners to practice doing these things themselves.

Magda: Do you know how it was in the beginning? I would take everything out of the washer, smooth it out, put it on the washer so it could lay there, stretched out, and Jakub would hang it up. And now I do not have to smooth it out, because he does it himself, he has learnt to do it. Before though... you should have seen those crinkles. I entered the drying room once and I couldn't believe my

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Referring to the same research with couples from Tricity made in 2009–2010, referring to household and parental duties division.

eyes! I took it all down, went to put it to the washing machine to rinse it, so I could iron out the crinkles faster and easier. The clothes were just hanging from the rails, all crumpled up, but he has since learnt, he does an ok job now, the clothes are always smoothed out nicely.

Magda [remarks]: You even practised, remember? I would take the clothes out, smooth them out twice, stretch the sleeves and the bottom parts [demonstrates] of garments. For the longest time Kuba thought that it was enough to smooth them out and hang them up even if they were lopsided. Didn't you? Bu that has changed.

Researcher: And can you set the washing machine too

Jakub: I can do it but I don't [laughs] I can, I can, I mean I could easily do it. Ok, chances are I could [laughs].

Magda: He would surely do it if he had to but I bet good money there would be something wrong with temperature settings. Do you think you would you set the temperature right?

Sometimes women will teach their partners the basics of a doing a given chore but will deliberately not teach them everything just to have an advantage over men; to have control over the final version, – they are not so much concerned about the cleanliness standards as they about standards related to the smoothing out, neat folding and proper hanging up of laundry.

Natalia: We often do the laundry, although sometimes we do the laundry twice a day for three days and other times we do not touch it for a week or so. Come to think of it, nowadays we do it more often than we did before because Filip does a lot of sports now. Filip sometimes does the laundry himself but usually I do it, about 60% of the time. Whoever does the laundry also does the sorting beforehand. We are careful to wash light-coloured clothing separately but we wash all the other, brighter colours together.

Filip: I also know how to do the laundry; I personally figured out how to operate our washing machine when we first got it. When it comes to hanging up the laundry – it depends who is more available to do it, we both do it equally often.

Natalia: And who folds the clothes and puts them in the wardrobe? ME. I often correct Filip's work. You know, when there are a lot of socks to be put in drawers, Filip just throws one on top of the other.

Filip: They will dry anyway, especially out in the fresh air.

Natalia: But they will take longer to dr, besides I lay the clothes down nicely, so that they dry neat. You know, so when they do dry they are not all crumpled up, or at least less crumpled. Filip does it carelessly.

Filip: Yeah, when you take things of the drying rack they are virtually ironed.(...)/ Now that's interesting, Come to think of it, when I do the laundry I try to wash as many of my own clothes as possible.

Natalia: You pick out your own clothes from the laundry basket? Filip: Yeah, I do.

Men admit they want to learn. When they are on the level of competence awareness they know "things do not happen on their own at home" and they do try to learn. They also learn to value self-sufficiency. And let's be honest here, women might not want to share their all their know-how when it comes to certain household chores because of the consequences this might entail.

Kamila: It annoys me that you put everything where you happen to be standing, you enter the flat with a letter in your hand and you just put it wherever you please or wherever it is convenient for you instead of putting it into one designated drawer. You do the same thing with your bag – you just put it down somewhere, anywhere, wherever. And these things lying here and there annoy me. A lot. So I put them away myself, or – and this annoys me even more – I tell him how annoyed I am. I hate feeling like some kind of tired, whiny wife – always putting everything away and forever complaining and nagging. I really don't want you to see me as the annoying "Why this?", "Why that?" type of wife so when you do annoy me – 9 times out of 10 – I don't tell you about it so as not to annoy you.

Women can accept their husband's willingness to help because for them it is still better than what other male partners in their social circle have to offer or what they themselves have experienced dealing with men throughout their lives.

Justyna: I can't complain, my husband has learned a lot. He knows when I'm pissed and expect him to do something ASAP. There are a lot of men who do not give a flying f\*\*\* about household chores. When a man earns a lot of money, he thinks he doesn't have to do anything else but it is different in our relationship.

Paulina is not responsible for household duties because she has hired a housemaid. Nonetheless she still expresses her discontent. She has and still gives her husband feedback on what is his responsibility. Case in point, if Adam does not empty his pockets himself before throwing his clothes in the laundry basket, she will not do it for him. And what if he happens to leave a pendrive in the pocket of his trousers? It's his loss.

Researcher: Does Adam hang the laundry up well?

Adam: I don't think so. Do I? I no longer show off, that's for sure. There isn't enough room now to put on a show.

Paulina: It's different [silence].

Adam: Ok, I will go home now, I'll wash the dishes and hang up the laundry (...). I think it's a kind of strategy that men have – they just do a bad job at something once and are done with ever doing a given chore again. I think they screw up on purpose.

Paulina: In the beginning of our relationship Adam liked to fool around, he would make a show of things, he even filmed instruction videos on how to clean the house, how to mop like a pro.

Adam: Yeah, I really put on a show.

Paulina: He showed me that if he had to he could do it. That's it. I don't criticise Adam because I know the cleaning lady will be doing the ironing and not me. I have the luxury of turning a blind eye if the laundry it's not hung up properly.

Adam: We had some problems with sorting the laundry; you used to wash the things in my pockets.

Paulina: Yes, but it was way worse that time when I washed your light-coloured trousers with some red handkerchiefs. You now have a few pairs of pink trousers. Mind you, your pen drive has been washed twice already.

Adam: But I have since learnt to take things out of my pockets.

Men learn the ropes and then practise on their own. They are better or worse pupils. They take duties off women only to some extent; they never completely take over. But women who have a "wife's apprentice husband" feel completely responsible for household chores and it is a mental burden for them. But given time, men's level of competence slowly increases. Unless the woman grows impatient during the learning curve and takes

the given duty away from the husband, there is a possibility he will take over the duty completely. But beginnings can be tough.

Interviews with couples show that women are more and more often also on the level of conscious competence. This is rarely the case when it comes to doing the laundry, but hanging the laundry up, ironing it not to mention caring for clothes, shoes, carpets, curtains – these are usually not things they learnt at home. Women's emancipation and subsequent ventures outside the home and into the world of work have resulted in some competences disappearing or being dropped on a conscious level. It means that women must also read the manual of an appliance more often than before and ask others for housekeeping advice; it also means that they feel less confident in their housekeeping skills.

# 4) Doing the laundry as an unconscious competence

The men we interviewed very rarely functioning on the level of unconscious competence when it comes to doing the laundry. In contrast, most of the interviewed women do, but not all of them. Magdalena does not hang the laundry up because she is allergic to household cleaning agents. She tried to make it Rafał's duty, but in the process doing the laundry has become an abandoned competence for her and this burdens her more and more each day. She does not want to do it but sometimes she feels she has to. She tries hard not to give into old habits. One remnant of this once unconscious competence of hers is her husband's need to ask for her permission to do the laundry. Rafał keeps asking: can I do the laundry?

Magdalena: I get angry because Rafał tends to do one load of laundry after the other and soon enough there is no place left on the drying rack to hang it all up. And drying racks are always getting old and breaking down. Just now we haven't had one for almost a week. And Rafał is very unhappy because he has nowhere to dry the laundry. And he cannot do it!

Rafał: You mean, operating the washing machine? When did I learn to do it? I learnt to operate it 15 years ago. Not that early in life – at the end of primary school. My mother used to do the laundry in

our house so I started doing it myself. No, wait, I know, I learnt do it when I started going off to London for weeks at a time during my university days – I had no other choice but to learn, really.

Magdalena: and in Ireland.

Rafał: So it wasn't actually that long ago. I don't hand-wash anything. (...) Oh, there's another thing! When you do the laundry, the washing machine barely makes it through the process without breaking down completely. Magdalena thinks she can wash as much laundry in one go as the poor machine can hold.

Magdalena: The instruction does says to fill it until it is full.

Rafał: No, when you do that it rinses clothes poorly and does not wash them thoroughly. (...) I do the laundry and it will stay this way.

Magdalena: There's a problem with hanging it up, though, because I always have to remind him, because we both don't like to hang it up, so it always goes like this: Rafał asks – "Can I do the laundry?" and I reply – "No, because you will forget to take it out in time and it will go all mildew. I can refrain from washing it, just remember to hang it up after you're done!".

Łukasz actually directly questions Monika's competence in doing the laundry, which has been assigned to her purely based on her gender. The laundry duty is connected with high competence for Łukasz – he can do the laundry on an unconscious competence level.

Łukasz: "Does Monika know how to do the laundry?" [ironically]. "Can I fill the machine up with this amount of laundry or is it too much or too little?", "Should I take it out?", "Hey, can you put in the washing powder!" – who asks these kind of questions?

Monika: Someone once told me I put too many things into the washing machine so now I ask.

The same applies to Wojtek. He also knows how to do the laundry "on the fourth level". He is also angry that Alicja does not do the laundry and when she does do it she does a bad job.

Wojtek: I am frustrated that Ala boils my shirts. When I do the laundry, my sleeves are adult-length, when she does it they are up to here [he points to his elbow]. I think you pushed the 60 degrees button by accident last time.

Alicja: I did not do it. I'm sure of it. Besides, I only ruined one of your shirts.

Wojtek: What do you mean: just one?

Alicja: they shrank because they were old.

Wojtek: Maybe... [He gives up].

Of all the interviewed men, Dominik is most certain of his competence when it comes to doing the laundry. He is on an unconscious competence level, he does the laundry and that's it. It is his duty.

Karolina: (...) All the rest, including the laundry is rather Dominik's territory, he washes both the white clothing and the colours.

Dominik: And we often quarrel about the laundry because I'll be hanging it up when Karolina says: "You know, I've got two white shirts here", it's just... I asked her to give me all her white things two hours ago and she said: "I haven't got any".

Karolina: Well, it's no biggie, we will just wash them with the towels next time.

In the next exercise we will ask you to learn how to do a new household chore - to move from the level of conscious incompetence to the level of conscious competence.

### A new chore

Try to totally change the division of one domestic chore in your house – in other words, swap chores for one week. For instance: the person responsible for doing the laundry should hand it over to his/her partner for a whole week. Write down all the barriers/ losses/ profits/ emotions this change evoked in you.



**EXERCISE** 

At the end of the week talk about it: how it went, what you learnt, what the obstacles were and what helped you learn how to perform the chore correctly. Determine whether you want to go back to the previous division of chores or whether you would rather keep up the swap for a longer period of time.

# How can we change our ways? Workshops on behavioural schemes

You probably recognise yourselves in some of the quoted couples. Household chores need to be treated as competence these days, competence one can develop. It was an important discovery of our survey. Think about your level of competence individually, and what model you implement as a couple. Probably, at least one of you sees himself/ herself on the 2nd or 3rd competence level (conscious incompetence or conscious competence). These are the areas of household chores you need to work on – this is recommended especially in the continuity phase of the relationship (we elaborate more on this issue in the Introduction). The workshop we recommend will help you divide your chores in a fair manner and make yourselves a good chore rota Surprisingly, after completing the workshop every couple does not necessarily decide to hire someone to do the household chores for them – though sometimes this is a good solution. But it also does not mean that from this day on Piotrek will do the laundry just because Iwona always used to do it. Or that Asia will do the laundry just because she knows how to do it. In helping you work on household chores division we will try to help you determine what your standards and skills are, what you like doing and what you don't like doing. We will try to encourage you to laugh at what irritates you. Within the presented exercises you will take a closer look at each other, checking on which competence level you are and what you want to change as far as vour chore division is concerned.

Looking at the baggage of culture, tradition and gender stereotypes we understand why men say they do not know how to do the laundry, and also why they do not want to learn how to do it. Although the macro statistics do not reflect the visible change in men's participation in household duties, the interviewed group shows a trend and direction of changes. When it comes to doing the laundry one can state that men will learn how to do it and women will feel less confident doing it, because they will hopefully do it less often. As far as household duties are concerned, men, apart from washing up, will also take on the duty of doing the laundry (equally uncomplicated as washing up) more and

more often and they will achieve the highest level of competence in doing the laundry: unconscious competence.

Constant day to day work on our relationship seems to bring good results for the whole family. Children raised by couples who implement the partnership model feel more involved in domestic chores. More and more often nowadays men feel just as responsible as women for what the house looks like and for its ambiance. By doing their fair share of household duties, people develop positive behaviour patterns and competences, which are essential for the proper functioning of society as a whole. They learn, as their parents did, skills which are necessary to manage and organise their time, to manage work-life and school-home balance, to communicate and negotiate effectively with others and to be able to really help others without doing them any harm. Partnership seems to be a social asset, an asset of great worth not just for couples but also for their children – allowing them to behave better in other public spheres and – later – in the families they themselves star.

ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

# DID YOU KNOW... On a collective level, preferences regarding the ideal model of family life are evolving towards more and more egalitarian relations. In research on Poles, conducted in 2013, the largest group of interviewees (46%) endorsed the model where women and men are equally involved in family and professional issues. (Hipsz, 2013)

### **Summary**

In the chapter A couple in the wash we wanted to share knowledge regarding changes which are beginning to take place in our homes. These are changes in the way we live our everyday lives. We all see them, but not everybody has experienced them – some are afraid of them, some can hardly wait. Let us remember that the decision what chore division will look like in our

households solely depends on us and our shared effort to make the most of this division. Only as a couple can we truly reorganise our home and only as a couple can we guarantee that the new order will work. Is it really all about making our living space cleaner? Not really. It does not really matter if it is cleaner, it is crucial that whatever changes to our life we do make we do them our way and we respect each other in doing so. So remember that:

- 1) Household duties are a crucial aspect of family life. Therefore, it is worth practising mindfulness when dividing them between family members.
- 2) Men and women who do their fair share of kitchen and bathroom maintenance and cleaning chores are more satisfied with their relationships and enjoy a better work-life balance.
- 3) Everyone can learn how to perform household duties like a pro, everyone can change his or her domestic habits and change the division of chores in their home. It all boils down to the willingness of two people to bring on changes and their openness to change.
- 4) Changes regarding domestic roles refer to the greater percentage of contemporary men taking on social roles once attributed only to women. It sets a good example for future generations. When children see their father hanging up the laundry they do not think it is a feminine chore and are themselves more likely to participate in household duties both now and in the future.

Kate and Michael changed most everything about how they do the laundry. They did not plan on it – it all happened by accident. The washing machine broke down and flooded the neighbours when Kate was on a business trip. Michael called the washing machine repairman. It turned out that their washing machine was beyond repair. The helpful repairman persuaded Michael to buy a 2 in 1 washer and dryer. "I've got one of these at home and I don't iron anything anymore. It's a godsend. And you can forget all about having to hang it all up after the washing machine is done" – he said. (He had worked in Norway more than once for a washer repair service. During his visits at customers' homes, he noticed that men in Norway did the laundry much more often than men in Po-

land. In Poland, men would only make small talk with him: they never knew how old the washer was or how often their family did the laundry. In Norway they would cut to the chase right away. It made his work much easier. After he came back from one of those business contracts, he had more spare time and – inspired by the Norwegians he had met – he got down to business and started doing the laundry himself. A Viking's chore is what he dubbed it).

Michael wanted to surprise Kate and bought a washer-dryer when she was away. He was so excited by the purchase he did not wait until she was back from her trip to try it out but immediately read the manual and learnt to operate it. He even found an instructional video on the Internet.

He washed his clothes himself, as he was planning to go on a business trip. He enjoyed operating the washer very much, "I kicked myself over the fact that I had not done the laundry myself all those years and would always have to wait 'till Kate had time to do it. Now I am independent." Michael "got round to doing the laundry through a technical path" (Kaufmann 1992) – thanks to specialist advice at home or in a shop, through the use of the Internet and self-teaching himself.

When Kate got back home, she was annoyed at first. She did not know how to use the new washer. "The dryer will surely destroy our clothes" – she thought. "On the other hand I always wanted Michael to take over some of the household chores and now there was a chance for that to happen. Since Michael has become a self-certified expert on operating the washer I will let him take over this duty.

The change came at the right time for Kate and Michael. Kate is pregnant. The amount of time we spend doing the laundry increases dramatically when we have a baby. Luckily, Michael is committed to doing the laundry. He has already googled which washing powders are suitable for washing infants' clothes. Thereby, over the course of a few months he slowly progressed from the level of conscious incompetence to the highest level of competence: unconscious competence. When Michael is away, Kate asks him for tips on washing particular types of garments. She gave up on being the household's "washer and washing specialist". There are other tasks she now performs on the unconscious competence level.

### Recommended reading

- Larsson L. (2011), Relationships Freedom without Distance, Belonging without (Org title: Relationbesiktning, frihet utan distans, gemenskap utan kontroll), Friare Liv Konsult, Svensbyn.
- Kaufmann J.-C. (2009), *Gripes: The Little Quarrels of Couples*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Kaufmann J.-C. (1993) *Sociologie du Couple,* Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Kohle A.-B., Reiz S. (2009), *Das Dalai-Lapa-Prinzip fur Paare: Wie achtsame Liebe gelingt*, Verlagsgruppe Random House GmbH, Munchen.
- Szuchman P., Anderson J. (2012), *Spousonomics: How to Minimize Conflict and Maximize Happiness in Your Relationship*, Random House Trade Paperbacks.

### **Chapter 4**

# Coupling couple – overcoming mental barriers

Anna and Tom have been a couple for 8 years. Their first child was born two years ago. Sex, although never very frequent, used to be a source of great satisfaction for both of them and an important part of their lives. However, after their child was born they practically stopped having sex. Although they both would like to go back to the way things were before the baby arrived, they often feel too tired – they plan to have sex, but nothing comes of it, because at the end of the day they are so exhausted they just fall asleep on the couch. They both feel they should change something and they miss their sex life but they have no clue how to start making changes, because so far they have failed miserably in their attempts to revive their sex life.



Fairy tales teach us that the beginnings of a relationship can be hard but couples, who overcome these initial difficulties always live happily ever after. Well, maybe the word 'happily' just has a few different meanings?

### The sex life of Poles in numbers

The average age of sexual initiation is 18,82 (for females) and 18,09 (for males).<sup>11</sup> But research indicates this age is constantly dropping. What is interesting is the correlation between the age of sexual initiation and Poles' average marks at school – the higher the marks, the later sexual initiation occurs. Girls usually first engage in sexual intercourse for the first time because of love (78,7%), arousal (50,2%) and for pleasure (45,9%). Boys do so for other reasons: arousal (64,3%), pleasure (64,4%) and curiosity (60,6%).

### SEXUAL ACTIVITY

The majority of adults in Poland are sexually active and sex is an important sphere of life for them. Most people marry for the first time between 25 and 29 years of age. A quarter of respondents lived with their partner for at least six months before they got married. Over 70% of the respondents have strong feelings for their partner, and what cements their relationship is a strong emotional bond and shared values, needs and life goals.

Over 80% of respondents report being satisfied with their relationship: 17% say it is very good, about 50% state it is good, and about 24% report it is quite good. People aged 25 to 39 are the most satisfied (they also value sex the most in comparison to other age groups); contentment decreases along with the age of respondents. Sexual activity also drops with age, though it is worth mentioning that more than half of the respondents aged 40–49 are still active – 57,7%.

35,2% of women and 62,6% of men always climax during sex. The rest experience orgasm often or sometimes. A complete lack of orgasm was reported by 0,2% of men and 1,2% of women.

16% masturbate and another 31% used to do it. 42% of respondents said they have never masturbated (26,8% of men and 58% of women). These statistics are very different from the

<sup>11</sup> All the statistics in this chapter based on: Izdebski (2012)

American ones which state that over 60% of women masturbate on a regular basis (researchers suggest even this number is an underestimation, compare Wincze, Weisberg, 2015).

What women enjoy the most in sex is: making out, caressing, stroking, having their breasts kissed by their partner, their partner fingering their labia, vulva and clitoris, their partner caressing other parts of their body, receiving oral sex and changing positions during intercourse. All these activities were indicated as preferred, but actually they were performed by (male) partners less frequently than women's preferences would suggest. There were no discrepancies between preferred and performed sexual activities in situations when the woman was the active party: only 14,4% of women enjoy giving oral sex to their partners, 4,3% like it when their partner ejaculates in their mouth and 2% enjoy anal sex.

WHAT WOMEN ENJOY

Men mostly enjoy making out, caressing their partner's breasts, giving and receiving oral sex, especially if it includes ejaculating in their partner's mouth.

WHAT MEN ENJOY

49% of respondents said they have oral sex, 18% engage in anal sex (mostly men).

The biggest fear respondents have concerning sex is unwanted pregnancy – 66% of women and 57.5% of men are afraid of it. HIV/AIDS comes second (41,7% and 40,3% respectively). Also, people are afraid of being judged in terms of sexual function and performance – this fear was reported by men (32,2%) more often than women (22,9%). Another common fear is that a person will fall short sexually, which is shared by 31,8% of men and 22,9% of women. About 25% of respondents are afraid of sexually transmitted diseases.

FEARS ABOUT SEX

The biggest difficulties with experiencing sexuality according to men are: general tiredness and stress (13,7%), having a new partner (11,1%), physical complaints and being ill (9,9%), alcohol or drug abuse (7,1%). Women indicated: fear of getting pregnant (18,1%), physical complaints and being ill (15,6%), general tiredness and stress (14,7%), no particular reason (8,4%), not being alone with their partner for long enough to have sex (7,4%).

DIFFICULTIES WITH SEX

16% of men complain their libido is too high, 16% – feel their sexual needs are greater than their partner's, 13% – suffer from premature ejaculation.

Painful intercourse was a problem for 17% of women. Other problems were: no desire to have sex (16%), vaginal dryness (13%), problems reaching orgasm (9%), and low libido (8%).

Over 55,5% of respondents do not agree with the statement that procreation is the aim of sex in a marriage, both genders disagree on that. There is a similar agreement about the fact that premarital sex is an important test for fiancés. These answers are at odds with prevailing religious norms.

### GENERATIONAL CHANGE

On the basis of Izdebski's research, one can draw the conclusion that we are in the course of a generational change: not only do younger people declare having greater interest in sexuality (which could be correlated with their greater sexual abilities, which in turn would explain why older people choose other activities over sex) but it also seems that sex is more important to them than it used to be for older Poles when they were their age – they talk more openly about it, they have more experiences in this sphere of life, they have greater knowledge about the subject and greater interest in the issue than older generations did. And they care less about religious norms.

There is a wide discrepancy between the fact that most respondents report being generally content with their sexual life overall and the number of them who report experiencing problems in their sexuality. The number of people satisfied with their sexual lives is rather similar to the number of people satisfied with their relationships (70% of respondents declared they were happy with their partner). Therefore, it seems the Polish evaluate the quality of their sexual life through the quality of their relationships, without obsessing over their own shortcomings or those of their partners. Perhaps that is also why half of the interviewees declared that if their sexual performance were to decrease it would have a negative impact on their relationship, whereas the other half of respondents thought that such a change for the worse would have a negative but limited impact on their relationship.

At the same time it is clear that in many spheres of Poles' sexual lives work is needed: premature ejaculation, dyspareunia, difficulties reaching orgasm. These are treatable dysfunctions. Many problems can be resolved through good communication between partners and their mutual involvement in resolving these issues – respondents are usually stressed out which means their work-life balance is undermined. It is worth mentioning that according to Izdebski's (2012) research, women declared a greater willingness to have sex in the summer months – the conclusion is that during the holiday period it is easier for women to find the space, energy and time for sex. Bottom line, the fact that such a high percentage of people are happy with their relationships and sexual lives is optimistic. This satisfaction is a sign of involvement and a perfect foundation for further work and subsequent changes for the better.

### The dynamics of a relationship

Relationships follow their own rules: as you could read in previous chapters we play games, we follow well-worn patterns of behaviour, and given time our relationship, once new and exciting, becomes something taken for granted and far too predictable to offer us instant gratification anymore. For some people this is the beginning of the end, but for most couples it means entering a new level of closeness. These dynamics are in part the result of human physiology: at the beginning of your relationship you were probably inseparable, you both easily found the time and energy to make love. These emotions fade with time and there is usually less sex as the relationship progresses (Wojciszke, 2009). Despite the fact that this initial state of being in love and mutual fascination is extremely pleasant for most people, we should be thankful to nature that these strong emotions fade with time. The brain of a person in love functions differently than that of people who are not madly in love – a person in love concentrates on the beloved object almost obsessively, which means that performing everyday tasks - including bringing up children - is difficult (Wojciszke, 2009). The difficulty is in maintaining a balance, so that this natural separation from our partner during the week does not cause the relationship to end, but rather helps us strike a happy medium between closeness and autonomy, a balance that both partners find equally satisfying.

If physiology and relationship dynamics were not enough, life also gets in the way of an intense and mutually satisfying sex life: there is work to get done, tedious household chores that have to be performed, small children to be taken care of, long months of pregnancy or quite the contrary – problems getting pregnant. All this tends to decrease our appetite for sex and sometimes we do not even have the energy to think about sex let alone have sex. Working yourself to the ground, depression, health problems, chronic stress – these are some factors that may get in the way of our sex life (Walser and Westrup, 2009).

### **SEX DIFFICULTIES**

Sometimes one partner or both partners struggle with sexual difficulties. Their primary cause may be psychological, e.g. difficult or traumatic experiences. They may also be physiological, such as experiencing pain during intercourse or erectile dysfunction. Most often it is a mix of both physiological and psychological factors: the initial psychological issue is exacerbated by a closely related physiological symptom (e.g. pain during intercourse may make us feel sexually unequipped, which will in turn intensify our aversion to sex itself. It could also happen that psychological factors cause changes in the body, e.g. fear of intercourse – a common cause of erectile dysfunction) may in turn lead to erectile dysfunction. That is why sexology is a science which incorporates many fields of knowledge, most of all medicine and psychology (Leiblum ed., 2007). At the end of this chapter you will find a short guide indicating which sexual problems should be consulted with an expert.

### We have all been there

You are two people, different people. Conflicts are inevitable. When feelings like anger, discouragement, and disappointment appear, it is hard to find the enthusiasm to have sex. What is more: tedious and time consuming household chores, working ourselves to the bone and managing an excessive workload, the games we start to play with each other, stress and conflicts negatively affect our intimacy over time. It seems that striking a balance between everyday challenges and "real life" – the one you dream of and desire – is hard.

HOW DO WE REACT TO DIFFICULTIES?

We feel you need to gain some perspective at this point: all these difficulties are normal! Every couple encounters problems, most people experience conflicts in their relationships. Most people experience times in their lives when they feel overworked, having a baby is also a challenge for most couples. These difficulties do not make your relationship, because every couple encounters them sooner or later. Difficulties are an inevitable part of life. What is important for your relationship is how you cope with them as conflicts are a natural part of "real life". The question is: do they bring you closer together, or do they make you drift apart (Walser and Westrup, 2009).

WONDERFUL SEX, AVERAGE SEX AND NO SEX

There is a kind of paradox here: if there has been less sex recently in your relationship, if you do not have the strength for it, it is highly probable that some thoughts-fears have already creeped in your mind: this is bad, something bad is happening to your relationship. The more you worry about sex, the more negative emotions arise and the more tired you are of this and the more convinced you become that feelings of contentment and happiness are a thing of the past. Every successful relationship has periods of wonderful sex, average sex and no sex (Wojciszke, 2009). It is crucial though to find your way back to yourselves when you realise you have given into stagnation, to be able to go beyond those difficult situations and emotions and build intimacy again. To find balance and joy in these challenges – whatever that "balance" is in your relationship. Every relationship is different. There is no one recipe for a happy relationship; every relationship requires work and emotional engagement, fighting off tiredness, aversion, bad emotions. It is up to you if this stagnation will be the beginning of the end or just an episode on the path you follow.

### Reigniting the flame in a relationship

There will probably come a time when there is very little or no sex in your relationship. This is a difficult time and it is worth knowing how to effectively power through this type of impasse. Sometimes both partners are too tired to get it on, but sometimes sex becomes less important to one partner. Such a time is especially difficult for the person who still wants sex and his/ her needs are ignored (sometimes only in his/ her mind, though). Sex should not be another chore we perform before calling it a day but on the other hand, taking a long break from sex can cause partners to drift apart (Nelson, 2012), and cause the relationship to resemble a friendship – there is nothing wrong in that, friendship is a wonderful thing, but if sex is important to you, it is worth caring for it – the longer breaks you take, the harder it is to get back into the swing of things.

# OF SEXUAL INTIMACY

Having this in mind, it is important to try and find time for sexual intimacy. It does not always have to be vaginal sex. Everyday duties sometimes make it difficult to work up the energy to have sex or even cuddle, caress, make out or just plain say something nice. The truth is though that these things are necessary and constitute an important and vital part of lovemaking. Both men and women stated that making out was the highlight of lovemaking so for that reason alone it is worth cherishing this act in a relationship. When people were asked in surveys, what sex meant to them, men said it was sexual intercourse. For women though the notion of sex was much more complex: sex is in a look we give someone, the way we touch someone, a compliment someone pays us, nice words and gestures which make us feel good and bring on the need to be physically close, all of which lead to intercourse (Brannon, 2002). If sexual intercourse does not necessarily equal vaginal sex then it can be understood as everything that is involved in lovemaking, including foreplay.

Sometimes men proceed to intercourse too fast, treating it as "proper sex". Many women find this abruptness almost offensive. When a woman is not ready and not properly aroused, she may find sexual intercourse unpleasant or worse, even painful, because her vagina is lubricated enough (it is not wet enough), and her whole body is not prepared for such intense sensations. Pain during intercourse and lack of lubrication in the vagina are the most common problems reported by women. Many women declare that caressing satisfies them more than intercourse itself (Leiblum ed., 2007). That is why it is hard to have good sex when a couple does not communicate and does not talk about their needs. And these may be different not only because of gender but also because they may change with time, as the relationship evolves. At the beginning it was

probably enough that you glanced at each other and you were instantly burning with desire, but later it may happen that more advanced foreplay is necessary to achieve the same level of arousal.

Most men want to satisfy their partners, it is not only a source of satisfaction but also a pleasure for them, but if they do not understand women's needs and women do not talk about them the task becomes backbreaking. It is hard to read your partner's mind and guess what they may desire. An additional difficulty is an often lingering conviction, especially among women, that if somebody truly loves someone, he/ she knows what the other party wants without them actually saying it. The truth is that no matter how strong our mutual feelings for each other are, we do not have the ability to read others' minds. We really do have to communicate our needs directly by opening up about them. If partners communicate openly and effectively it is possible to break an impasse and to create a framework for sex where both partners will be satisfied. If you feel you need to be caressed differently than before, you need to be touched in different way or something annoys or disturbs you – there is no other way but to talk about this with your partner. It is possible that as time passes by, you as a couple keep on going along the same beaten track – if either one of you does something that suggests sexual innuendo your partner interprets it in a wellworn way. In doing so we close ourselves off to each other and to novelty (as in the Games people play, Berne, 1996) and turn off sexuality in ways you read about in the chapter about games. For instance, when we see our partner spread out on the couch we interpret their behaviour as a lack of interest in or care for sex – and thereby – we feel invited to lie next to him/ her. Sex has two planes: emotional (partners feel safe with each other, they feel mutual love and respect for each other, they understand each other) and a more physiological one (they can satisfy each other physically). So in a technical sense, sex

is talk, which leads to closeness as well as skilful caressing, and love making which is mutually satisfying for lovers. Sometimes

LET'S TALK
ABOUT SEX

it is hard to balance these two planes.

### An exercise for You

### Thoughts and events, which make intimacy difficult

### **EXERCISE 1**



Think about the following things and find the answers to the following questions. Each partner does this exercise on his or her own.

Factors	How does this factor make living together difficult?	What can I do to stop this factor holding me down?
tiredness		
stress		
children		
partner's		
behaviour		
how I perceive		
my body		

Have you noticed any regularity? Perhaps finding obstructive factors was quite easy, but looking for solutions might be difficult. If it was like that in your case, it is natural – our minds naturally turn to difficulties, looking for solutions requires effort. Unfortunately, obsessing over problems is often an obstacle to being happy together. Try to find as many possible solutions to the problem as you can. When you concentrate on solutions rather than problems you feel that joyful sex is in your reach whereas when you look at things from the point of view of problems it does not seem that way – although "objectively" nothing has changed.

### Date night

### **EXERCISE 2**



Sometimes it is hard to find time to go on a date with each other. Still, do your best and try to make time for this. If you have children, get someone to baby-sit them for an evening. Go on a date. It can mean going to the cinema, a café, or just for a walk. Treat this time as something special; you can dress up to the nines (as you probably did on your first few dates), you can arrange to meet at some venue in town or leave the house together. Try to show interest in one another, find out what the other person has been up to recently, how she/ he feels. Notice what your partner did for you (perhaps your part-

ner put on your favourite dress, perhaps he/she took you out to a place you really like). If you have children try not to talk about them during the date. It is your time, time for adults. The goal of the date is to spend time together, to build intimacy. It is not supposed to end with sex, unless you both want it to. But if sex comes with difficulty at this moment, it is good to establish beforehand that neither partner should expect sex. Try to concentrate on the pleasant aspects of the date, praise your partner when you notice he/ she did something nice. Try to withhold criticism when you witness a behaviour you do not like – you can talk it over some other day.

How did it feel? Do you feel it brought you closer to each other? Was anything about the experience difficult? If there were any difficulties, what would help you overcome them? Time spent together and interest shown in each other really brings couples closer together, but sometimes couples just do not have the time and strength to go out on date nights – the questions is, how can you change your priorities to find time for romance?

MORE TIME, BETTER SEX

Long hiatuses in sexual activity may happen, they can be caused by the difficulties of pregnancy or childbirth, or other problems such as being overworked. Getting back into the swing of things after such a break may be (but does not have to be) stressful. This is the result of the dynamics of the evasive reaction (Beck, 2011). If we have a task to do, a task we consider difficult, the closer we come to doing it, the more negative thoughts appear in our mind regarding this task. If a couple does not have sex for some time, difficult thoughts may appear: "he/ she does not love me anymore", "I am not attractive", "I can't make it through this ", "It's no use", "I am tired", "It's not a good day for sex".

The longer the hiatus, the bigger probability of negative thoughts appearing which in turn leads to the couple avoiding sex altogether. It does not have to mean there is no love and desire between partners anymore, but sex requires a certain effort, which is sometimes hard to make. So if you discover you are in such a situation, try to plan time for sex together and take up the challenge it brings. As "date" time approaches, you will probably feel uncomfortable about it. Your mind may fill up with thoughts to retreat and not take up sexual activity. It does not have to mean something is wrong with your relationship.

TIME FOR SEX

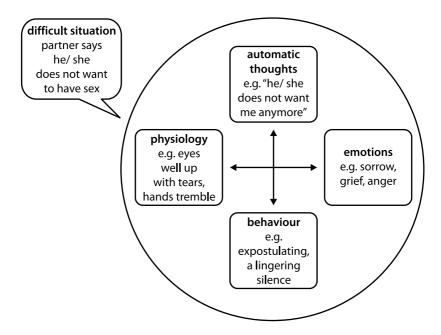


Fig. 3. Vicious circle of thoughts, emotions and behaviour

It may be plain physiology, the result of the hiatus: you feel tension and uncertainty overlapping with a growing feeling of tiredness, and these feelings and sensations increase the closer it is to the hour you set for spending time together The difficulty here is to find a happy medium. It is not good to force yourself to have sex; on the other hand it is sometimes hard to get in the swing of things after a break. If there appears to be some aversion to this activity, it is crucial to be honest with each other and resolve the difficulties connected with this first, i.e. an evident conflict between partners. On the other hand, it is essential not to strengthen the evasive reaction, so if there are no real reasons not to have intercourse, you should have it, even if you feel it is not the perfect time. You could wait forever for the perfect moment, so just accept this existing moment and all its imperfections. It is highly probable that during foreplay you will feel much more involved and enthusiastic about it than you were to start off with. However, if during this attempt to have sex your aversion to it becomes unbearable, it is better to stop and talk things over with your partner.

### The female orgasm

Up to 30% of women report experiencing difficulties reaching orgasm (Wincze and Weisberg, 2015). It means they do not reach orgasm at all, or they reach it only when masturbating or only in specific situations. The remaining 70% of women achieve orgasm, but it does not mean they always climax or that they climax during vaginal intercourse (Wincze and Weisberg, 2015). Most women need clitoral stimulation to be able to climax either during a heavy petting session or when the clitoris is stimulated in certain sexual positions, e.g. when the woman is "on top". Only about 8% of women reach orgasm through intercourse in positions where the clitoris is not directly stimulated (Lloyd, 2006). Unfortunately there still exists a conviction that women should climax through vaginal intercourse alone – but as we can see, only a small percentage of women do. As preliminary research shows, the orgasmic abilities of a woman depend, among other factors, on the distance between the clitoris and the vaginal opening (Wallen and Lloyd, 2011). The nearer they are to each other, the easier it is for a woman to climax. Unfortunately this is a congenital factor we have no influence over.

The clitoris was barely known to medical science for a long time. Only in 2005 did scientists manage to determine its entire shape and structure, and since then we have obtained more and more information about it (O'Connell, 2005). It is an organ about 9 cm long and only a small area of it is exposed under the clitoral hood. The clitoris glans – lies above the urethra and vagina opening. The area above the urethra is the so called shaft (external shaft). A wishbone-shaped structure containing the corpora cavernosa starts there – when the clitoris glans is erect its two 'legs' encompass the vagina on either side, as if they were wrapping around it giving it a big hug. When the woman becomes aroused – due to sexual stimulation or within the circadian rhythm - increased blood flow causes the clitoris to become engorged and firm, similar to an erection in men (Lloyd, 2006). However, most women are not aware of this process, as it is hard to observe because of the female anatomy.

There are women who climax quite easily, but most need to learn how to do it. Most women learn to climax during sex usually within a year of becoming sexually active. The more experi-

**CLITORIS** 

enced a woman is sexually and the better she understands her body, the easier it s for her to achieve orgasm. One of the best ways to learn about our own body is through masturbation.

# FEMALE MASTURBATION

Female masturbation is still considered taboo (Wincze and Weisberg, 2015), but as we can see it is a rather common phenomenon, though cultural requirements cause many women to deny this. On the other hand, not every woman is able to climax when masturbating and some are afraid to engage in self-love because of cultural factors – all of this can (but does not have to) make climaxing with a sexual partner more difficult.

The key to the female orgasm lies in the right sexual position. Many positions during intercourse may be very pleasant and can fuel mutual desire but not many of them have the potential to make the woman climax because in most of them the clitoris is not stimulated enough. What usually works is the so called "woman on top" position and its variations, which give woman the ability to control the rhythm of the intercourse as she can move in ways that provide her with ultimate stimulation.

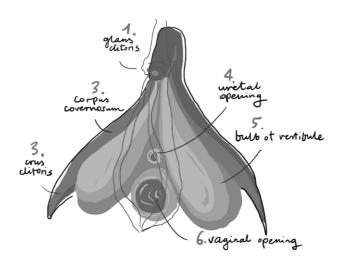


Fig. 4. Clitoris (by M. Danaj)

### **POSITIONS**

The classic, so-called 'missionary' position, also has a great potential to give women pleasure but it is important for the man to move his hips in the right way. For most men, "forward-backward" or "up-down" movements (depending on the sexual posi-

tion of choice) are most satisfying. For women, however, gentle circular movements are much more satisfying (if partners are facing each other), because during such movements the clitoris is stimulated by the man's pelvic bone (Chalker, 2002).

### An exercise for You

### Get to know your body. An exercise for women

Arrange a time to do this exercise when you are home alone and nobody will disturb you. Get naked, sit comfortably and grab a mirror. Take a good look at your genitals; try looking at them as if you were dong this for the very first time. What is beautiful about them? What is arousing? What are you grateful to them for? If you are pregnant or if you have already had a child: how have they changed and what have those experiences taught you? What do you think your partner finds exciting about them? Try to find your clitoris, touch it, and try to determine its shape and sensitivity.

Have you noticed any negative emotions arising? What emotions are they? Why do you think they appeared? What would help you acquire a more positive attitude towards your own genitals? If this exercise is too hard for you, try to ask your partner to help you get to know your body when you are intimate with each other.



There are a lot of negative convictions in our culture about female sexuality. Not only is there a stigma attached to women's sexual needs but women are also perceived as sexual objects (Brannon, 2002). As a result, many women are torn apart, because they do not know what is really expected of them, and therefore they can end up denying their own needs altogether

**EXERCISE** 



STEREOTYPES
AND FEMALE
SEXUALITY

– they often receive feedback from others that their needs are either negligible or should not even exist, or that these needs may put them in danger (e.g. the threat of being raped), or that they will not be socially accepted (double standards: women who act on their sexual needs are promiscuous and this is perceived by society in a negative light). Sometimes men give women contradictory feedback, on the one hand they want a sexually liberal partner, on the other hand – they are afraid of female desires because a woman who clearly communicates her needs may be perceived by some men as potentially unfaithful due to the socially charged stereotypes of feminine sexuality. Therefore it is crucial for men to support their women and understand that their needs need not be seen as a threat to their masculinity.

Although this not directly related to sexuality, in most households, women do more than their fair share of household chores. It often makes them feel exhausted or bored, which does not foster their sexuality nor their appetite for sex. Research (Reissman, Aron and Bergen, 1993) indicates that couples have the most sex when they are on vacation together. Being away from everyday life, not being worn down by household chores and – what is especially important – experiencing novelty which brings a certain level of excitement – all this makes women crave sex more. Unfortunately, most people cannot afford frequent vacations. The solution then is to engage more in household duties if you are a man. It may take the burden off women and give them the space they need to feel sexual desire.

### Male sexuality

## MALE SEXUALITY AND PLUMBING

Men perceive their sexuality in a different way than women. Women usually complain about their low libido, relationship issues, discomfort during intercourse or the absence of orgasm; men on the other hand usually struggle more "technical" with the technical side of sexuality: erectile dysfunctions or premature ejaculation. Because of this, male sexuality is often perceived in terms of 'plumbing'. In the case of women, people tend to perceive sexual problems as multifaceted and multidisciplinary. In the case of men, a stereotype exists: the man always wants sex, but may not always be able to have sex. It can

be partly explained by the fact that men report these kinds of issues the most to specialists and rarely complain about other issues (Wincze and Weisberg, 2015).

Popular culture has us all convinced that male sexuality is very simple indeed: men always want sex, no matter, who with and no matter the circumstances. Gender stereotypes have robbed men of their sensitivity. Contrary to popular belief, men too struggle with emotional issues but they do not have a place to express them. They too can be exhausted, stressed out and emotionally worn out - and these factors can negatively affect their sexual needs just like they do in women. Conflicts with their partner, or more generally, negative emotions; can cause men's libidos to shrink. Because male sex is based on prowess to a greater degree than female sex (the female physiology gives women more space to hide their lack of physical arousal or emotional involvement when engaging in sexual activities), men are also perceived as more responsible for sex happening, and therefore they are under greater pressure. Additionally, more and more women expect sexual satisfaction during sex, which makes some men feel lost in what seems like a maze of contradictory expectations (on one hand they are supposed to always be ready, on the other - tender, romantic and attuned to their partner's needs). This pressure may cause men to experience problems getting and/ or maintaining an erection. If this happens, the reaction of the woman is of crucial importance. Sometimes women, convinced that "a real man always wants sex and is always able to have sex", take such difficulties personally, even perceive them as a personal attack. As a result, they can exert pressure on their partner, expecting him to display his arousal as much as possible. This only increases the stress the man experiences, and exacerbates the problem. The solution is to show tenderness and understanding: everybody can be exhausted or stressed out. The way to get the erection back is to experience a sense of closeness and less pressure to perform sexually.

Another frequent problem is premature ejaculation, which may affect up to 30% of men (Wincze and Wiesberg, 2015). This dysfunction is treatable. Understanding that sex is more than just intercourse is crucial, meaning that as long as the problem persists, sexual relations can be built in a different way, e.g. by caressing each other.



### Kinky stuff

### EXPLORING YOUR SEXUALITY

When you feel ready you are free to explore your sexuality. This chapter concentrates on going back to basics, but if the exercises included in our manual come naturally to you, or if you have achieved the goals you wanted to achieve, you can spice up your sex life a little. Some minimum requirements must be met though: whatever you do, it cannot breach your partner's boundaries. The exercises are arranged so that you might think over what your expectations are and what you feel comfortable with. It is important to feel comfortable with the basics before you start introducing novelty to your sex life. When there is intimacy between you, it will be easier to talk about your needs and fantasies. When you are able to satisfy each other through "typical" ways of being close, it is easier to build on that and add new elements to the mix. Bear in mind though that, paradoxically, introducing novelty to our sex life is not always a good idea: when the sex is not very good, some couples try to introduce some novelties to it (dildos, sexy outfits, role play scenarios etc.). Although this can prove successful in reviving our sex life it is much more likely that you will feel even more lost and disheartened. So if you feel close to each other and your sex is already satisfying – explore! If you experience intimacy in your relationship, you understand and respect each other the possibilities to uncover new and exciting sexual activities are never-ending. But if you are going through some difficult times in your relationship, you are better off going back to the basics. There is nothing worse than a couple who tries to force each other to do things they do not want to do in bed - this can make you drift apart from each other.

### An exercise for You

### Spicing up your relationship

Arrange to spend some quality time with your partner. Make sure no one will be able to disturb you. Beforehand, write down 5 things you would like to do with your partner. Sit down so you are facing each other and read aloud what you have written. Partners should listen carefully to each other. After you read each of your points, your partner may ask some additional questions. Ideally, you should take turns – when you or your partner have read all five proposals you should switch roles. Then, you should each choose one of your partner's proposals and plan when and how you are going to realize it. Human sexuality varies from person to person. You have explored it in a various ways, too: what you have on your sheets of paper are your needs and desires. These fantasies may push your boundaries a bit in comparison to the things you used to do until now – this is all ok as long as you are both ok with it.

EXERCISE



During this exercise you may notice you experience difficult emotions. Perhaps your partner will suggest something you do not want to do, something not in line with you values. People are different as far as sex is concerned and it is natural for you to be attracted to different things. It is crucial to find things that you are both attracted to. You do not have to be the same in everything. Do not judge your partner, do not criticise her/him. If one of your partner's suggestions is not ok with you, tell her/him you would not feel comfortable doing it. Remember, you can change your mind over time. It may be so that your partner is more open to experimenting than you are and the things that do you do not feel comfortable doing now may become interesting for you after some time. And if something is just not for you? Mutual honesty and respect is crucial (do not do things you do not really want to do).

**DIFFICULTIES** 

No fantasies are too trivial to pursue, you can even chose kissing each other on the neck, talking about sex, exchanging sexual fantasies. Perhaps you are both very open, then you can go a step further: play dress-up, introduce sex toys, put yourselves in intriguing situations – no one knows better than you what you expect from sex.

FANTASIES AND WISHES

#### **SAFETY WORD**

Having a "safety word" is always a good idea, perhaps you already use it. It is helpful when your partner says or does something that makes you uncomfortable – you say the safety word and your partner stops what he/ she was doing immediately. The word should be guite easy to pronounce: in case you or your partner are in some uncomfortable position or your mouths are covered. Bottom line, it must be easy to both say and understand no matter the circumstances. It is also important for the word to not be associated with sex in any way – so we do not use it by accident. Such a carefully chosen safety word will help you if you decide to play sexual games. When one person pretends he/ she is not interested in sex, thanks to this word you will know when his/her "no" is an actual "no" (both partners should always agree to play such "pretend" games beforehand, otherwise "no" always means "no"!). Using a safety word, which is absurd in the context of sex, also helps to stop the aroused partner in his/her tracks - it just knocks her/ him out, which is useful because we all know how easy it is to lose control during sex.

It is hard to explore and enhance our sexual life between doing one household chore and another. Bear in mind that you want your partner to open up to your desires and refrain from sharing them at an inappropriate moment. Otherwise you could inadvertently put your partner off the idea of spicing up your sex life.

### Should you see a specialist?

In case of problems with sexual health it is worth consulting a doctor: a gynaecologist if you are a woman or a urologist or andrologist if you are a man. Both sexes can consult a sexologist. If the doctor rules out physiological causes of a sexual dysfunction or if medical treatment is not enough to resolve it, psychotherapy is often recommended. Behavioural and cognitive-behavioural therapies are considered to be the most effective in treating sexual problems (Leiblum ed., 2007). Below you can find a list of symptoms that should be consulted with a specialist.

### Men:

# DIFFICULTIES: MEN

 You experience problems with getting an erection: you cannot get hard at all or your erection waxes and wanes or you have the impression that your penis is not as hard as it "should be". One-off difficulties with getting an erection are quite normal, it can happen to any man (tiredness, problems focusing on sex, other factors are usually at play in such situations). However if the problem reoccurs or persists you should go see a doctor immediately, because it may signal a life-threatening disease (e.g. cardiovascular disease).

- You ejaculate very fast, too fast in your opinion, or you have difficulties in reaching orgasm and the problem recurs; so-called premature ejaculation is a very common problem. There are certain drugs, which help delay ejaculation, you can also use behavioural therapy, which can help you better understand your body and gain more control over the process of ejaculation.
- You feel pain or discomfort during intercourse.

### Both sexes:

- Your libido is lower than usual, perhaps you have no appetite for sex at all; or your libido is higher than usual; at the same time you feel anxious about your libido level and you perceive it as "unusual" (changes in libido are something normal during the course of our lives, also in some moments of our lives our "appetite" may vary, but if those changes make you feel anxious, e.g. you do not have sexual needs at all now despite having had them, or you want sex all the time and your libido used to be lower, it is good to see a doctor).
- You experience strong negative emotions at the very thought of having sex, e.g. nausea, dizziness, strong fear; you feel strong negative emotions during sex, this can sometimes be accompanied by unpleasant images; in this case we strongly recommend seeing a doctor.

#### Women:

 You experience difficulties reaching orgasm; you have never had an orgasm or you used to climax but now you do not, you can only reach orgasm with certain people, e.g. by yourself or with your ex-partner, or in very unusual circumstances, e.g. only in public places. This predicament is a cause of anxiety for you. DIFFICULTIES: BOTH SEXES

DIFFICULTIES: WOMEN

You feel pain or discomfort during intercourse, pain may emerge at the very thought of sex or when the penis starts to penetrate the vagina; in case of a dyspareunia or a vaginismus diagnosis (pain during intercourse) behavioural therapy may prove useful – a therapist can help eliminate the discomfort you experience during sex through relaxation techniques, if it is necessary he/ she will also work on your beliefs concerning your sexuality (e.g. your fear of committing a sin by having sex or your subconscious fear of men). One of the means of therapy is improving your partner's technique, which also helps to alleviate discomfort.

### **Summary**

Although the belief that love is enough to build a good relationship is still strong in our culture, practice shows that mutually satisfying relationships require work, emotional involvement and commitment:

Problems and difficulties are a part of every relationship, the more we focus on them, the bigger they get

If we are not aware of our beliefs and fears it is hard to understand why it is difficult for us to stay in a relationship – when we understand ourselves, we open up to the needs of our partner

Communication is essential to fulfil our needs – sex is more than just intercourse. To rekindle the flame and keep it going we need to be kind, tender and respectful towards our partner and ourselves. Sex is different at different stages of our lives – if you communicate directly and effectively it will be easier to stay close and overcome any difficulties that might occur.

Sexual problems do not typically disappear on their own; if talking it over is not enough do see a specialist, that is what they are there for.

Anna and Tom's sexual dry spell was primarily the effect of the birth of their child: they were not allowed to have sex at first (for the first six weeks that followed childbirth) and then when they finally could have sex Anna felt exhausted and sleepy, and therefore not interested in sex. This is when Tom first started to worry

that they would never get their sex life back. He was afraid that the birth of their child had changed their relationship forever. He also started to hold a grudge towards Anna, as he thought that she did not notice him anymore. To make matters worse, Anna appeared to be resentful towards Tom. She wanted Tom to take over some of the household duties she was burdened with and to take care of their child more often than he already did. Anna found herself worrying that Tom neither loved nor wanted her anymore and that she was no longer important to him. Although both partners loved each other, it was hard for them to overcome the impasse – each of them felt hurt and brushed off by the other. Their lack of sex was mainly the result of both of them feeling hurt. And because they were not having sex they found it even more difficult to get close to one another, as it was sex that used to bring them closer. Talk about a stalemate.

When they managed to get out of the house for date night, they felt closer to each other again. They once again felt close and this allowed them to really think about what they could to make time for each other on a regular basis. What they expected before was that their partner would finally change something – specifically that Tom would "finally" take over some chores from Anna, and Anna would "finally" give her attention to Tom. These unexpressed expectations had served as building blocks for a thick wall they had inadvertently started to build between each other and the wall was getting higher with every passing day. Finally they decided to openly talk their problems over.

Anna admitted that Tom's greater involvement in childrearing would let her get her groove back and feel sexy again. She found it hard to feel sexy when she was constantly taking care of the baby. Besides, she felt that after the pregnancy and time spent nursing her baby she had to rediscover her body – she was convinced it had changed and she needed some space to befriend it once more. This need to discover herself again was keeping her from getting closer to Tom and caused her to subconsciously avoid opportunities for love-making. The exercise of looking closely at one's body encouraged Anna to pause and reflect on her body. On the one hand it gave her space to grieve the loss of her pre-pregnancy body, on the other hand it provided her with a newly found sense of strength and in turn allowed her to perceive her post-pregnancy body as a new source of femininity. She felt tremendous gratitude for the

fact that her body had given her such a wonderful baby and her grief diminished – she felt she was ready to befriend her body once again and open up to all the great things she could continue to experience thanks to it, including sex with Tom.

Thanks to the chart included in this chapter, Tom was able to see what really prevented Anna from being sexually intimate with him and realized she wasn't avoiding him because she didn't love him anymore but because she felt insecure about her post-pregnancy body and because she was dead tired from taking care of the baby all day, every day. Upon realizing all this, Tom said he would help Anna and would organise his time in a way which would enable her to have time to herself during the week – this would give her time and space to do anything she fancied and saw appropriate.

Thanks to the talk they had, Anna realised that there was more to Tom's needs than raw sexual desire – he genuinely missed her and the intimacy they shared. He wanted to have sex with her – sure - but mostly he missed spending time with her, the tender loving care she used to show him and the sense of closeness he had when they were together. He said that although the lack of sex had annoyed him a great deal, he felt he would have handled it better if Anna had been more tender with him or had showed any interest in him. He discovered that the most difficult thing for him was not the fact that they did not have sex anymore but that he had started to feel useless in their relationship. When Anna found out how important she was to Tom and how hard he took her brushing him off, she felt her desire for him return and started to crave intimacy with him again. Thanks to all the sharing and talking, their next attempt to have sex was a success and both partners felt they had found a way back to each other.

### Recommended reading

Beck J.S. (2011), *Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Second Edition: Basics and Beyond*, The Guilford Press, New York.

Chalker R. (2002), *The Clitoral Truth: The Secret World at Your Fingertips*, Seven Stories Press, New York.

Daedone N. (2012), *Slow Sex: The Art and Craft of the Female Orgasm*, Grand Central Life & Style, Boston.

Leiblum S.R. (ed.) (2007), *Principles and Practice of Sex Therapy*, The Guildford Press, Cambridge.

- Lloyd E.A. (2006), *The Case of the Female Orgasm: Bias in the Science of Evolution*, Harvard University Press, Beverly.
- Nelson T. (2012), Getting the Sex You Want: Shed Your Inhibitions and Reach New Heights of Passion Together, Quiver.
- O'Connell H.E. (2005), *Anatomy of the clitoris*, "The Journal of Urology", p. 1189–1195.
- Reissman Ch., Aron A., Bergen M.R. (1993), Shared Activities and Marital Satisfaction: Causal Direction and Self-Expansion versus Boredom, "Journal of Social and Personal Relationships", no. 2, p. 243–254.
- Richardson D. (2003), The Heart of Tantric Sex. A Unique Guide to Love and Sexual Fulfilment, O Books.
- Wallen K., Lloyd E.A. (2011), Female sexual arousal: Genital anatomy and orgasm in intercourse, "Hormones and Behavior", no. 5, p. 780–792.
- Walser R.D., Westrup D. (2009), *The Mindful Couple. How Acceptance and Mindfulness Can Lead You to the Love You Want*, New Habringer Publications, Inc., Oakland.
- Wincze J.P., Weisberg R.B. (2015), Sexual Dysfunction. A guide for Assessment and Treatment, 3rd edition, The Guildford Press, New York.

### **Chapter 5**

# Couple in Norway – or a few words about living in a different culture 12

Up until the fifties, Norway was only slightly better economically developed than Poland. The dominant branches of industry were fishing and agriculture, both of which require great effort in the harsh climate of Scandinavian countries. Today Norway is the richest and most expensive country in the world. Norway's GDP exceeds 100000 dollars per capita a year, making it roughly six times greater than that of Poland. This success was supported by the discovery and exploitation of the country's rich oil reserves. However, oil reserves in and of themselves do not automatically

NORWAY AND ITS ECONOMY



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Chapter written in cooperation with other members of Par Migration Navigator: Brita Gjerstad (IRIS), Kuba Kryś (IP PAN), Gunhild Odden (CIK), Oleksandr Ryndyk (CIK) and Gunn Vedøy (IRIS).

translate into economic growth as countries such as Venezuela or Nigeria – serve to illustrate – rich oil reserves have paradoxically pitched these countries into severe financial and political crises. Norway, on the other hand, was able to make the most of its rich oil reserves. The key to Norway's success lies in the Scandinavian mentality (Hansen, 2015; Strand, Freeman, 2015).

# SOCIAL LIFE IN NORWAY

No one is special. Do not try to stand out or pretend you are better than others in any way. These are the rules of social life in the fictional town of Jante, which exists only on the pages of Norwegian writer Aksel Sandem's short story. We have reason to believe though that this set of norms known as 'the law of Jante' accurately describes the social reality of Norway and Scandinavia as a whole.

### NORWEGIAN STYLE

The social life of our northern neighbours is regulated by the principles of equity and modesty. Hardly anyone in this country blatantly displays their wealth – in fact, we are much more likely to spot brand new cars and huge mansions, which look out of place in their surrounding in Poland than in Norway. One small painting on a huge white wall? Sure, this is the ultimate symbol of elegance and luxury in Norway. Norwegians themselves insist that Norway is not a country of great significance, so... in order to be able to communicate well with other people in the world, Norwegians learn English from a very early age.

### NORWEGIAN SOCIETY

Do Norwegians buy into the whole 'time is money' mentality and lifestyle? No. Norwegians have instead opted for a civil society governed by mutual trust, moral rectitude and dependability. Research from the European Social Survey (ESS) has shown that the percentage of Norwegians involved in NGOs work is four times greater than its equivalent in Poland. In fact, Norway has the highest rates of social trust and trust in institutions (people trust institutions in Norway) among all the surveyed European countries, whereas Poland has one of the lowest. Also, most likely because of its protestant work ethic, corruption in Norway is a marginal phenomenon – people are really honest and genuinely care about the common good. In fact, the Polish word "kombinować" (to work an angle) does not have its equivalent in the Norwegian language.

### GENDER EQUALITY

Similarly, when it comes to the Global Gender Gap Index Norway has been ranked the third most egalitarian country in the

world. A woman operating a forklift or a man taking parental leaves willingly to take care of his child? Not at all surprising in Norway. Systemic tools not only foster gender equality in the workplace – in order to activate women in the labour market – but are also geared at making it easier for men to engage in family life. In 1993, Norway made world history when it introduced the 4 week paternity leave quota. Poland introduced a two-week paternity leave quota in 2010 – the paternity leave quota in Norway was 10 weeks at the time.

Parental leave for fathers is an even newer concept in Poland – it was only introduced in 2013. 315 800 of Poles exercised their right to a parental leave in Poland in 2014, among them only 5200 were men (1,65%). When Norway introduced the parental leave only 4% of fathers took advantage of the possibility in the first few years but very soon the percentage increased exponentially to a whacking 70% and now – according to some recent estimates – up to 90% of Norwegian fathers take parental leave. The average fertility rate in Norway is 1,9 whereas in Poland it is 1,3 (World Bank data).

WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

PARENTAL LEAVE

42% of executive positions in Norway are occupied by women, whereas in Poland only 12% (European Union average: 18%). How is this possible? There is a law, which guarantees a certain number of seats in companies' boards for women. It enables women to break through 'the glass ceiling'. What effect has guaranteeing women places on company boards had on the country's economy? Norway has topped world economy rankings for years.

**OUALITY OF LIFE** 

Has this spectacular economical and social prosperity come at some grave cost to Norwegians? Are they majorly depressed as they are often perceived by other Europeans – is there any truth to the rumour that Norwegians suffer from so-called 'Nordic depression'? Not at all. ESS and Eurostat's research shows that Norway is one of the happiest and least depressed European countries. Quality of life? The welfare state idea, dismantled by Margaret Thatcher's government in Britain, is still nurtured and developed in Norway. As a result, Norway has the highest quality of life indexes in the world today (e.g. HDI – Human Development Index), and England is near the bottom of the ranking, closer to Poland than Norway.

#### COMMUNALITY

The most renowned Polish economists argue that the spectacular growth of Norway's wealth paired with its upkeep of equality among citizens was only made possible by its revenues generated from oil. However, experiences of other Scandinavian countries prove that it is not oil but a society organised in a wise and communal way that has been the key to its success. Revenues from oil are undoubtedly helpful but mostly in strengthening the beneficial effects achieved by means of a wise social policy and by a nurturing the concept of a welfare state.

# WORKING IN NORWAY

A genuine sense of security fostered by social support makes Norway a country with one of the lowest unemployment rates. If Norwegians are putting on chic clothes they are probably going... to a party. When they go to work, they wear comfortable, neat casual clothes. Overtime? Only if the boss asks politely. And you do not have to agree to do it. Trade unions in Norway are important not only because they have numerous members, but mainly because they cooperate with company boards to meet the needs of both the employees and the company.

Norwegian equality is also evident in state laws. Even the worst criminals (e.g. Anders Breivik – who killed 70 people) are handled with respect and dignity by the Norwegian justice system. This really surprised Poles. EVERY ONE in Norway has indefeasible dignity and no one is allowed to violate it.

### POLES IN NORWAY

Every culture has its logic. For people from the outside a given society often looks to be full of contradictions and sometimes even absurd. Some Poles perceive Norway as an unfriendly country, full of traps. The main reason behind the negative image of Norway in our country seems to be the cultural distance. We are accustomed to norms and rules regulating our lives in our own house. And Norway is different from Poland in this respect. Norwegian solutions do not have to suit everyone. However, it seems that Norway actually suits many Poles, thousands of whom have chosen it as their "place on Earth". Our countrymen and countrywomen are the biggest non-Norwegian ethnic minority in Norway. Poles have been the most numerous immigrant group in Norway since 2006. Almost 100000 Poles have settled down in Norway. According to the newest data from SSB (Statistics Norway), Poles constitute almost 14% of all the immigrants who have settled down in this Scandinavian country (SSB, 2015).

Poles who chose Norway have joined other trans-national families, also called "world families". World family is a family, which – often by chance – has started to live beyond the borders of their country of origin because of their choice of spouse, migration, a job offer etc. The term 'world family' was coined by a famous couple of sociologists: Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim and the late Ulrich Beck (2013).

Migration is as rich in golden opportunities as it is fraught with danger. In the case of mixed marriages, e.g. Polish-Norwegian, living in Poland or Norway, according to the Becks (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2013: 47), one spouse may become a cultural expert and the other – a confused foreigner, which often affects their roles in the relationship. Couples have to establish a balance of power every time they relocate or move country. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) states that "as a result women and men redefine traditional gender roles and invent new ones", hence the conclusion: migration is can be a golden opportunity for a couple who has to learn to successfully cooperate in order to reach mutually satisfying agreements. This is surely a benefit of being a world family.

CHALLENGES
MIGRANTS
HAVE TO FACE

"Procedures and the rules of engagement must therefore be negotiated. World families must cooperate in order to instinctively work out the procedures and rules that govern reflexive negotiations. If anything, this requires the willingness to take someone's perspective, the effort to understand our partner's point of view - to see our reality and ourselves from the perspective of the Other. Walking in the shoes of a loved one the alien Other at the same time - is recommended not only for the sake of our partner but also for the sake of our mutual love for each other, thereby also for the sake of our - well-conceived – own good" (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 2013, p. 241). In other words, migration offers couples the chance to improve the quality of their relationship, because when we are exposed to a different culture it opens our eyes to alternative ways of being together. Thanks to moving country, many things about our relationship, which were set in stone in Poland, can be demolished and/or remodelled thanks to new agreements we come to together.

**WORLD FAMILIES** 

On the other hand, there is a risk of "biographical reversal" among migrants and mixed couples" wherein our partner suddenly becomes very orthodox when it comes to adhering to certain rules of conduct dictated by the country and/or culture of their origin. This can be a very difficult time for their spouse who remains faithful to his/ her beliefs, ones which not so long ago they shared with their spouse. "The person who is at the receiving end of their partner's biographical reversal is confused at first when it comes to their partner's unusual behaviour, they no longer feel safe. Then he/ she feels hurt, rejected, even threatened by their estranged partner. And thus a vicious circle of mutual accusations sets in" (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2013, p. 62). This can happen when the couple is expecting. Immigrant couples may suddenly stop assimilating. They can become afraid of their new country of residence, its rules and their right to influence the way a child is brought up. The greater the difference between partners concerning this issue, the bigger the risk of conflict. Often one spouse wants to bring the child up in line with the principles and habits of the country of their origin, whereas the other spouse – wants to follow the rules of the guest country.

Summing up – migration is both an opportunity and a threat. In the following chapter we want to show you how to make the best of it – we reflect on how Polish immigrants have changed over the years, which elements of the Norwegian culture they like, and which are difficult for them to accept.

Michael is runner. He is addicted to running. If he could he would spend every minute of the day jogging by the sea or in the forest. He participates in every competition possible. Mary does not like this disparity. She does not mind that Michael has a hobby. But she too would also like to have time to herself. When she communicates this to Michael, he is indignant: "But you can do what you want! I am home today, so go out tonight wherever you want. But actually, where would you go?" Mary: "Right. It's cold and it raining. I'll stay home."

Marys thinks: "I should do sports, too", but also: "we have so little time together, if I go out alone tonight we have even less time together".

Michael thinks: "if she does not go out, she does not want to, I won't nudge her."

4 years ago. Soon after this conversation Michael and Mary decided to move to Norway for financial reasons. They both got good jobs there. They started earning more money. But that was not the most important thing. They were home at 4 PM every day. Although at this time of day in Stavanger it is dark half the year, and it rains about 75% of the time, they started to spend more time together.

Michael took advantage of the free time immediately – he started running more often than in Poland.

He saw that others, both Norwegians and Poles, ran despite the rain. "There is no bad weather, there are only bad clothes" – they would say. Indeed. Running in such a beautiful place as Stavanger turned out to be wonderful regardless of the weather. Almost everybody talked about sport at work every chance they got. Finally he had someone to share his passion with. If only Mary would find herself a hobby.

Noticing the changes moving country had had on their relationship he started to wonder about their relationship and the opportunities they had been given.

We are more likely to contemplate our fate when we are about to make a life-changing decision, when we change our environment or when we are observed by others. Taking a trip or moving country meets all these criteria. From the moment we start planning our travels to the time we report on it we keep asking ourselves the same questions: "Am I doing this right?", "What do others think of me?", "What else can I do to have fun?", "Does anyone have it better?". And when we travel with our partner we also ask ourselves: "Are we doing this right?", "What do others think of us?", "Do others have it better?". Thanks to these questions a couple reconstructs itself when travelling and moving country.

Let us go back to Michael and Mary:

Back in Poland, Michał's friends were indifferent about running and the couple left their country before running became a thing in Poland and nationwide campaigns with catchy slogans like "I run for the love of it" were popping up everywhere. In Norway running helped Michael instantly bond with newly met people. Besides, in Norway he had more free time.

What did Mary do with her spare time? She was bored so first she grabbed a Chodakowska<sup>13</sup> DVD. She trained on the down-low, at home. She loved it. Michael noticed her efforts. He bought her an exercise mat and gym clothes for Christmas. Then she started picking Michael's brain about running. Did he think she could start running too? What kind of shoes should she get? Could he maybe run with her? So many people, gals and guys, ran in Stavanger. Regardless of the weather! Her company held an ongoing a "Runner of the Month" contest to single out the employee who managed to run the greatest number of kilometres each month and she found herself entertaining the thought of taking part in it. Perhaps she would take part.

If they had stayed in Poland she would never have taken up running. And it would never have crossed her mind to run in complete darkness or in the pouring rain. It just would not have matched her idea of 'a good wife'. She would prefer to spend the little free time she had with her husband rather than running. The A change of place brought about a change in attitudes (running is for everybody, not just for fit men) and this in turn brought about lifestyle changes (she began to go out more often).

Running brought them closer together. They often run together now. When they come to Poland, they always take their running shoes with them. They are astonished how many people run in Poland these days. They joke that they had to move to Norway for Mary to find a hobby.

Mary and Michael's example shows how long you can keep to well-worn patterns of behaviour even if you are not satisfied with them. Polish couples in Norway have a chance to change, because their whole world changes with the move. Patterns of behaviour change. They look around and see couples behaving differently than they do in their native country and these put ideas in their heads. Men take care of their children. Really take care of them. All day.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Polish famous YouTube fitness coach.

### DID YOU KNOW...

In Norway, when the child is between 9 and 12 months these are usually fathers who stay with them the whole day (92% of Norwegian fathers take parental leave) (according to International Labour Standards, ILO, 89% of fathers took parental leave in Norway).

Everywhere you go in Norway you see fathers with their children – in the streets, playgrounds, parks, feeding them, helping them walk. It's quite a sight!

Poles who live and work and Norway are also treated differently in the workplace. Their boss is more like a partner to them and they are encouraged to treat their boss as a partner as well. They become accustomed to the new mentality, pick up new skills and feel encouraged to try new ways of doing things. Moving to another country has made them more likely to reflect on their life, they have found out a lot about who they are, they have suffered losses but have also gained a lot through the experience. They also appreciate the fact that they can count on each other and realize how important this is in a relationship.

The experiences of Polish couples who have emigrated to Norway show that it is good to change even if we do not move abroad. Our manual suggests just that – it encourages readers to work on themselves and their relationship. We show readers how to create and improvise new scenarios, ones, which will allow them to gain some perspective on things and become open to different options. Of course you can always go back to the way things were but few people do when things change for the better.

In the research we conducted in Norway we observed Polish couples and asked them questions about their everyday routines and whether they found it hard to adjust to life abroad. The research material allowed us to compile a list of recommendations for couples thinking of emigrating to Norway as well as some practical how-tos on interacting with Norwegian institutions.

### Reports from Par Migration Navigator research: Poles on Norwegians.

Poles perceive Norwegian culture as progressive - they are especially impressed by the seeming ease with which Norwegians' combine their family life with their professional life. This is something they learn from Norwegians. especially when they have the opportunity to work with them. They learn if their attitude towards Norwegians is open, when their newly adopted behaviours seem to be paying off in that their quality of life has increased and/or they feel accepted by Norwegians. Poles like the fact that in their free time Norwegians keep themselves occupied with active lifestyle pursuits, regardless of the weather: "There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing". They run and ski. If Poles display a pro-sport attitude it is very well received by their Norwegian acquaintances. Poles pick up Norwegian patriotism - they like the way the 17th of May is celebrated in Norway. The most important changes in behaviour are those that pertain t the roles the spouses play in the household. Having a generous amount of free time and the possibility to share parental and sick leave results in Polish men – just like Norwegian men – performing many household chores (they report being more involved in cleaning the house, running the washing machine and dishwasher and doing more of the cooking. They take a 3-month long parental leave.

On the other hand, Polish women living in Norway have noticed something very interesting: they find they have fewer opportunities to manifest their femininity. There are hardly any events that call for them to have to get glammed up e.g. wear high heels and put on an elegant clothes. In their opinion Norwegian women take less care of their appearance and manifest their femininity to a lesser degree, which makes Polish women feel they also have few opportunities to do so.

# Recommendations for Polish couples emigrating to Norway<sup>14</sup>

What is worth remembering if you have decided to move to Norway, are entertaining the thought of migrating to Norway or have already moved there?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Authors: Oleksandr Ryndyk and Gunhild Odden, Center for Intercultural Communication (SIK), www.sik.no, Based on findings from WP4 "Migrant couples re-conceptualizing childhood and parenting".

### **Preparation**

When it comes to Polish families migrating to Norway, the tendency is for men to emigrate first and then be joined later by their families. This can be easily explained by the need to secure a sufficient level of income for the entire family as well as a place to live before their arrival to the country. In Norway, family migration for EU/EEA citizens can be done via the registration procedure for EU/EEA citizens (Norwegian, *Registrering-sordningen for EU/EØS-borgere*).<sup>15</sup>

### **Arrival time**

If you have children and you want to bring them to Norway, you may consider doing it in the summer time. And it is not necessarily because of the weather. July is the month when most people in Norway, including you, take extended time off work. When your children arrive in Norway, you and your partner will be the only people familiar to them in their new homeland. It is therefore crucial that you spend enough time together with them so that they feel comfortable and 'at home' in their new home. What is more, in July schools and kindergartens have not started yet. This means that your children will not have to deal with double the stress: adapting to a new location (e.g. finding out where the shops are, how public transportation functions, etc.) and at the same time adapting to a new learning environment. Finally, our first impression of a new country can have a big impact on our ability to grow accustomed to living in it. For all these reasons, summer is probably the best time of the year for your children to get to know Norway. Take the whole family on a road trip so that they can discover their new surroundings, or barbecue outdoors and invite your friends; go on a hike in the mountains or swim with them in the sea or the lakes. Summer in Norway offers plenty of opportunities to organize your and your family's leisure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> You can find more information about the procedure here: http://www.udi.no/skal-soke/registreringsordningen-for-eueos-borgere/?c=pol#link-883 (accessed: 15.12.2015).

# The better you get to know people – the more knowledge you have about them

Our research findings suggest that many Polish families in Norway tend to hardly interact with Norwegians and therefore their knowledge of the Norwegian society as whole is very superficial. For many Polish families, Polish Internet forums<sup>16</sup> or Polish groups on Facebook (e.g. Tablica Ogłoszeń Polonii Norweskiej with about 20,000 members or Polacy w Norwegii with some 10,000 members as of November 2015) seem to be the main source of information about Norway. Such resources can be useful for immigrants especially in the initial stage of cultural integration when they are not yet fluent in Norwegian. However, extensive usage of such resources may lead to a situation where most of the information one receives about Norway is written by fellow Poles in Polish. As Internet forums are open platforms where everyone can contribute, the information we come across there is often biased, tainted by people's personal experiences or by what they 'have heard' from someone else.

### Norwegian vs. Polish television

There is also a tendency among Polish migrant families to prioritize Polish television over Norwegian TV. On the one hand, it enables migrants to stay informed about current affairs in their home country and allows their children to maintain their Polish language skills. In addition, it can be more affordable than Norwegian television as one can access it via the Internet. On the other hand, watching Norwegian television at home is very important because it allows immigrant's children to get along better with their Norwegian peers. Most Norwegian children who attend kindergarten and primary school watch the Norwegian TV channel for kids (in Norwegian, "Barne-TV"). Therefore, children and teenagers living in Norway who do not get a chance to watch Norwegian TV, particularly kids' channels may experience difficulties in relating to their peers and engaging in conversations about TV. This can negatively affect immigrant children's socialization, their ability to form and maintain friendships, their progress at school and their progress in learn-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> E.g. http://www.mojanorwegia.pl.

ing Norwegian. Despite the high cost of Norwegian TV in comparison to Polish TV, we strongly advise you to buy access to it and try to look at it as an investment in your children's future success in Norway, and not as an unnecessary expense in the family budget.

### Leisure

Many Polish immigrants in Norway, especially men, quickly discover that the stricter Norwegian working time regulations leave them with slightly more free time than what they were used to back in Poland. Some immigrants may find it difficult to fill up their free time with meaningful activities. Most Norwegians spend their free time engaged in various organized leisure activities. Such activities include – practicing sports (e.g. playing football, basketball, badminton, running, swimming), taking up creative hobbies (dancing, choir, playing in orchestra, etc.), cycling and going for walks. Many Norwegians do volunteer work. "Frivillighetssentralen" coordinates all kinds of activities related to volunteering. There are 406 "Frivilighetssentraler" in Norway (November 2015).<sup>17</sup> In addition to passing time, organized leisure activities help immigrants meet new people, socialize, and expand their social networks in the new country of residence.

Organized leisure activities also play a crucial role in the socialization of immigrant children by helping them make friends in a new country Norway is an ethnically diverse country. It is not uncommon in big cities such as Oslo, Stavanger, or Bergen to meet people of more than a 100 different nationalities. Friendships with people from different ethnical and cultural backgrounds, usually built around common interests (such as sports, dancing or singing) help young people become more tolerant, knowledgeable and open to new experiences.

Immigrants who have just arrived in Norway and therefore have limited knowledge about the country may think that organized leisure activities are too expensive. Some of these activities can

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> If you want to help, if you need help or if you just want to meet people from your new neighborhood you can contact your local group: http://frivilligsentral.no/?pageslug=hjem-3895 (in Norwegian).

be rather expensive, while others can be free of charge. Some municipalities might also have special offers for immigrant children. We suggest you contact the above-mentioned Frivillighetssentral, the Sports Club (in Norwegian, *idrettslag*) or the Culture School (in Norwegian, *kulturskole*) to get information about prices and different options).

### Norwegian parenting style

Many migrant families who come to Norway find that the way Norwegians raise their children is very different to the way they bring up their children. In Norway, physical punishment is forbidden and problems or challenges tend to be resolved through dialogue between the child and the parents. The Norwegian parenting style is often understood as individualistic, with the child in the centre. The following table summarizes what we can call the Norwegian parenting style (see the table 1 below).

Table 1. Norwegian parenting style

Values	Parent behaviour
Equity and freedom	Parents play with their children
Understanding of democracy, and	Parents treat the child as a
democratic negotiations	communicative partner from day one
Self-realisation	Parents reward and praise their
	children for their achievements
Family obligations are optional,	Boys and girls are treated more or
non-obligatory	less equally
The child expresses its own needs,	Parents are usually the only people
and knows best what they are	who fulfil children's needs, they are
	the sole care-takers

Source: Based on Hundeide (2003, p. 90) and Nøhr Larsen (2004, p. 29) in Holm-Hansen et al. (2007, p. 44)

In our project, Polish families which have just arrived in Norway, seem to think that the Norwegian parenting style is not appropriate for their child/children and perceive Norwegian children as, "disrespectful towards others", free to do "whatever they want". On the other hand, we see that families, which have spent some time in Norway, find positive aspects to the way Norwegians bring up their children. Learning to be "independent" and "responsible" are mentioned as positive outcomes of

the Norwegian Parenting style. It is normal to have negative impressions when childrearing practices are different from the ones you are used to. We suggest you treat the Norwegian parenting style with an open mind. Once familiarize yourself with it, you might be willing to include some of its key concepts in the way you bring up your own child/children.

### The Norwegian educational system

The Norwegian educational system is different from the one in Poland. Many migrant families think that the Norwegian educational system favors playing over learning. Upon arrival, you might be surprised to see that your child/ren will spend a lot of time playing. However, all kindergartens and schools follow state-regulated curriculums. In Norway, playing is seen as an important tool for learning, including learning social skills.

Migrant families might also be surprised to see that their child/ren spend a lot of time outdoors. Small kids (0–3 years old) also take their nap in their stroller, which is parked outdoors. In Norway, children play or sleep outdoors even when it rains or snows, even when the temperature falls below 0 degrees.

Many migrants find the dress code in Norway different to what they are used to. It is common understanding here that clothes should be more functional than fashionable. That is, they should be easy to move in, warm and waterproof. If children's clothes get dirty during play, it is not seen as a problem. As one of the Polish mothers interviewed in the project said, "they [the Norwegians] believe dirty kids are happy kids!" During the winter, Norwegian children tend to wear woollen underwear and therefore some members of staff in the kindergarten your child attends may expect your child/ren to wear this kind of underwear too. If you have any questions regarding the clothes your child is expected to wear to kindergarten in Norway, we suggest you ask the staff in the kindergarten for advice. Some kindergartens will provide you with a list of required clothing.

# Instructions/guidelines for couples emigrating to Norway on dealing with the public sector<sup>18</sup>

### CHECKLIST

Below please find a list of questions that you might consider asking yourself in case you live or plan to move to Norway. The list is based on interviews carried out among Polish couples in Norway and with Norwegian public sector employees.

- 1. Have you registered at the local tax office?
- 2. Have you got an employment contract?
- 3. Have you considered whether to go for public or private language tuition?
- 4. Have you checked what forms of insurance you need?
- 5. Do you know where to get medical assistance and how to contact your primary care physician?
- 6. Where are the closest hospitals?
- 7. Do you know how the emergency medical services operate?
- 8. Have you checked which pensions you are eligible for?
- 9. Do you know what benefits and allowances you are eligible for?
- 10. Do you know that you should report all workplace accidents and immediately seek medical help? This could affect your future benefits.
- 11. Do you know that all pregnant women have the right to free healthcare provided by licensed midwives throughout their pregnancy?
- 12. Do you know that you have to apply to the municipality to ensure your child a place in a kindergarten? And that there is only one intake a year?
- 13. Have you checked what expectations the kindergarten has of you as a parent?
- 14. Do you know that children start school the year of their sixth birthday?
- 15. Have you checked what expectations the school has of you as a parent?
- 16. Do you know that everybody has the right to join a labour union?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Preparation: Gunn Vedoy, IRIS – Research Institute of Stavanger

- 17. Do you know that everybody is entitled to at least four weeks of paid holiday each year, and that three of these weeks are uninterrupted?
- 18. Have you checked what the legal maximum working hours are and how overtime is regulated?
- 19. Do you know where the nearest local church is?
- 20. Do you know the difference between self-certified sickness absence and sick leave?
- 21. Do you know that after four weeks of employment you have the right to sickness benefits due to illness?
- 22. Do you know how to set up a Norwegian bank account?
- 23. Have you checked possibilities or recreational activities in your local community?
- 24. Do you know what the rules and regulations are when it comes to fishing?
- 25. Do you know that the emergency numbers are 112 for the police department, 110 for the fire department and 113 in case of a medical emergency?
- 26. Barnevernet/Child protective services
- 27. Have you checked the Internet pages for your municipality? Some of the information might be in English or Polish
- 28. Have you checked out the webpage: nyinorge.no/pl?
- 29. Have you checked what to do with waste, and how to sort waste in the municipality where you live?
- 30. Do you know that between the 1st of April and the 20th of August you have to have your dog on a leash when walking it outdoors?
- 31. Do you know that the local NAV office can help you write job applications and create a CV?
- 32. Have you checked with the Norwegian Public Roads Administration how to get a permission to drive in Norway? Web page: http://www.vegvesen.no/en/Home
- 33. Do you know where to find various application forms in your municipality?
- 34. Do you know that the service centre in the municipality you live in will answer all your inquiries about public services?
- 35. Do you know that you have to register in the population register after living in Norway for 6 months?

- 36. Have you checked the cost of public services? Do you know that many of them are free?
- 37. Do you know that children up to 18 years of age have the right to free dental care, but adults do not?
- 38. Do you know that Norway has strict alcohol and drugs legislation, and that you only can buy wine and liquor at the nearest wine monopoly?
- 39. Have you checked the different custom regulations? Information is available in Polish at: http://toll.no/en/international/polski/

GOOD LUCK!

### **Authors**

### Magdalena Danaj

Graphic artist, cartoonist and illustrator for media, books and advertising. Author of famous Porysunki (porysunki.com) – short comic forms, viraling in the web for last 10 years. Works for "Przekrój", "Bluszcz", "Gazeta Wyborcza", Wirtualna Polska, LGBT Festiwal, "Bliza", Nasiono Records.

### Magdalena Gajewska

She works at the University of Gdańsk, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, Division of Sociology of Culture. She studies family dynamics and bond building among couples that are expecting or have just had a baby. She analyses how culture influences the experience of childbirth. She is also interested in magic and witchcraft, not just scientifically. To achieve greater balance in her life she is currently studying psychology and communication in sport. She is a mother to Ola; enjoys horse riding.

### Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka

Has a PhD in Psychology and works as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cross-Cultural Psychology and Psychology of Gender at the University of Gdańsk (Poland). She coordinates the courses within curriculum related to cross-cultural psychology. Her main area of research is cross-cultural psychology of gender and her special interests are social change and cultural cues fostering gender equality within societies across the world. She also has an expertise on diversity management in organizations. She is an organizational trainer and consultant working with multicultural groups. She is Principal Investigator in international consortium PAR Migration Navigator She is also an active member of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) and European Association of Social Psychology (EASP). Since 2006 she has co-organized annual conference Woman in Culture, held on International Women's Day at University of Gdansk. The conference attracts both Polish

AUTHORS 133

and international academics and practitioners working in the field of gender equality. In her private life she is happily married to Maciek:) They have two sons together: Franek and Mikołaj. They travel together; they love cycling and trekking.

### Marta Znaniecka

She is a mindfulness and stress reduction trainer (based on MBSR – Mindful Based Stress Reduction). She studies categories of spirituality in Early Education. She is interested in the idea of school where the child's/ pupil's/ student's inner life is perceived as important and significant. She is married to Łukasz, they have three daughters together: Jagna (7), Róża (5) and Inka (1). She enjoys both the clamour of family life and the peace and quiet of spending time on her own. She likes to unwind outdoors, whether travelling, working in the garden or reading books. She loves learning about life from wise people.

### Agnieszka Wroczyńska

Cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist, sexologist. She works at CBT clinic in Gdynia, where she practices individual and couple therapy. When analysing her patient's problems she notices how similar we are all are. That is why it is so important to open up our minds and hearts to our significant others. She supports acceptance and empathy as ways to building a more complete and joyful relationship. She loves to travel and share her life with Michał, her partner of ten years.

### Magdalena Żadkowska

She is an academic teacher and senior researcher at the University of Gdańsk at the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, Division of Sociology of Culture. She conducts qualitative analyses of the domestic and professional lives of couples: those in Poland and those who have emigrated abroad. She studies the division of chores and the negotiation of worklife balance in couples. She reminds people about equality and diversity issues when strongly involved in dissemination projects. She is a business coach, media expert, and social project creator. She has been married for 20 years to Marcin. They have a 19 year old son Staś and a 15 year old daughter Marysia. Magda loves skiing and kitesurfing.

### Literature

- Allred K.G. (1999), Anger and Retaliation: Toward an Understanding of Impassioned Conflict in Organizations [in:] Research on Negotiation in Organizations, eds. R. Lewicki, R. Bies, B. Sheppard, vol. 7, JAI Press, Greenwich CN, p. 27–58.
- Beck J.S. (2011), *Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Second Edition: Basics and Beyond*, The Guilford Press, New York.
- Beck U., Beck-Gernsheim E. (1995), *The Normal Chaos of Love*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Beck U. (2002), Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa.
- Beck U., Beck-Gernsheim E. (2013), Miłość na odległość. Modele życia w epoce globalnej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Berne E. (2007), *W co grają ludzie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Bourdieu P. (2004), Męska dominacja, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa.
- Bradbury T.N., Fincham E.D. (1990), *Attribution in marriage*, "Psychological Bulletin", no. 107, p. 3–33.
- Brannon L. (2002), *Psychologia rodzaju*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk.
- Budrowska B. (2000), *Macierzyństwo jako punkt zwrotny w życiu kobiety*, Funna, Warszawa.
- CBOS (2008), Badanie przeprowadzone na zlecenie Fundacji Partners Polska, http://www.mediacja.org/upload/files/Jak\_Polacy\_sie\_kloca-wyniki\_badan.pdf.
- Chalker R. (2002), *The Clitoral Truth: The Secret World at Your Fingertips*, Seven Stories Press, New York.
- Chełpa S., Witkowski T. (1999), Psychologia konfliktów, UZUS, Warszawa.
- Daedone N. (2012), Slow Sex: The Art and Craft of the Female Orgasm, Grand Central Life & Style, Boston.
- Davis M.H. (1999), *Empatia. O umiejętności współodczuwania*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk.
- Dąbrowski K. (1979), *Dezintegracja pozytywna*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa.
- De Singly F. (1996), *Sociologia della famiglia contemporanea*, Palomar Athenaeum, Bari.

LITERATURE 135

- Deutsch M. (2005), *Współpraca i rywalizacja* [in:] *Rozwiązywanie konfliktów. Teoria i praktyka*, eds. M. Deutsch, P.T. Coleman, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.
- Duch-Krzystoszek D. (2007), *Kto rządzi w rodzinie. Socjologiczna analiza relacji w małżeństwie*, IFiS PAN, Warszawa.
- Eurostat (2013), Sustainable development in the European Union. Statistical Books, p. 76–90.
- Everly G.S., Rosenfeld R. (1992), *Stres. Przyczyny, terapia i autoterapia*, PWN, Warszawa.
- Giddens A. (2006), *Przemiany intymności. Seksualność, miłość i erotyzm we współczesnych społeczeństwach*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Grochola K., Wiśniewski A. (2011), *Gry i zabawy małżeńskie i pozamał- żeńskie*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków.
- Hansen K. (2015), Exploring compatibility between 'subjective well-being' and 'sustainable living' in Scandinavia, "Social Indicators Research", no. 122, p. 175–187.
- Heszen I., Sęk H. (2007), Psychologia zdrowia, PWN, Warszawa.
- Hipsz N. (2013), *O roli kobiet w rodzinie*. Komunikat z badań CBOS BS/30/2013, CBOS, Warszawa.
- Hochschild A. (1989), The Second Shift, Viking, New York.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo P. (1994), *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*, wyd. 4, University of California Press, Oakland.
- Holm-Hansen J., Haaland T., Myrvold T. (2007), Flerkulturelt Barnevern. En Kunnskapsoversikt (Multicultural Child Welfare Services. A Knowledge Overview), Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning, NIBR).
- Holter Ø.G. (2014), "What's in it for Men?": Old Question, New Data, "Men and Masculinities, Gender and Society", no. 17, p. 515–548.
- Izdebski Z. (2012), *Seksualność Polaków na początku XXI wieku. Studium badawcze*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.
- Jakubowski J. (2014), *Trenowanie spontanicznej reakcji empatycznej*, http://www.grupatrop.pl/index.php/strony-specjalne/bait-baza-artykulow-instytutu-trop?id=318 (accessed: 17.11.2015).
- Jørn H-H., Haaland T., Myrvold T. (2007), *Flerkulturel barnevern. En kunnskapsoversikt*, NIBR-rapport.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2007), Gdziekolwiek jesteś, bądź, IPSI Press, Warszawa.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2009), *Życie piękna katastrofa. Mądrością ciała i umysłu możesz pokonać stres, choroby i ból*, Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Instytut Psychoimmunologii, Warszawa.
- Kabat-Zinn J. (2014), *Praktyka uważności dla początkujących*, Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warszawa.
- Kaufmann J.-C. (1993), *Sociologie du couple*, wyd. 4, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

- Kaufmann J.-C. (1995), *Trame coniugali. Panni sporchi e rapporto di coppia*, Edizioni Dedalo, Bari.
- Kaufmann J.-C. (2007), Familles à table. Sous le regard de Jean-Claude Kaufmann, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Kaufmann J.-C. (2010), Wywiad rozumiejący, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa.
- Kohle A.-B., Riess S. (2012), Dalajlama dla par. Jak kochać uważnie, Zwierciadło, Warszawa.
- Kolb D.A. (1981), Learning Style Inventor, McBer and Company, Boston.
- Kolb D.A. (1984), Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Kosakowska-Berezecka N., Besta T., Adamska K., Jaśkiewicz M., Jurek P., Vandello J.A. (2015), If My Masculinity is Threatened I Won't Support Gender Equality? The Role of Agentic Self-Stereotyping in Restoration of Manhood and Perception of Gender Relations, "Psychology of Men and Masculinity", dx.doi.org/10.1037/men0000016.
- Kwak A. (2005), Rodzina w dobie przemian. Małżeństwo i kohabitacja, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa.
- Larsson L. (2011), *Porozumienie bez przemocy w związkach. Zbadaj swo- je relacje*, Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warszawa.
- Leiblum S.R. (ed.) (2007), *Principles and Practice of Sex Therapy*, The Guildford Press, Cambridge.
- Lloyd E.A. (2006), *The Case of the Female Orgasm: Bias in the Science of Evolution*, Harvard University Press, Beverly.
- Moore C.W. (2012), *Mediacje. Praktyczne strategie rozwiązywania konfliktów*, Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Grupa Wolters Kluwer SA, Kraków.
- Murcott A. (1983), Cooking and the Cooked: A Note of the Domestic Preparation of Meals [in:] The Sociology of Food and Eating, ed. A. Murcott, Gower, Aldershot.
- Nelson T. (2012), Getting the Sex You Want: Shed Your Inhibitions and Reach New Heights of Passion Together, Quiver.
- Nowakowska A. (2006), *Mężczyzna polski psychospołeczne czynni-ki pełnienia ról zawodowych i rodzinnych*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomicznej, Białystok.
- O'Connell H.E. (2005), *Anatomy of the clitoris*, "The Journal of Urology", p. 1189–1195.
- Ostrouch-Kamińska J. (2011), Rodzina partnerska jako relacja współzależna podmiotów. Studium socjopedagogiczne narracji rodziców przeciążonych rolami, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków.
- Parsons T. (2009), System społeczny, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków

LITERATURE 137

- Pużyński S., Wciórka J. (2000), Klasyfikacja zaburzeń psychicznych i zaburzeń zachowania w ICD-10. Opisy kliniczne i wskazówki diagnostyczne, Versalius, Kraków.
- Rapoport R., Rapoport R.N. (1971), *Dual-Career Families*, Penguine Books.
- Reissman Ch., Aron A., Bergen M.R. (1993), Shared Activities and Marital Satisfaction: Causal Direction and Self-Expansion versus Boredom, "Journal of Social and Personal Relationships", no. 2, p. 243–254.
- Richardson D. (2003), The Heart of Tantric Sex. A Unique Guide to Love and Sexual Fulfilment, O Books.
- Siegel R.D. (2011), *Uważność. Trening pokonywania codziennych trudności*, Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warszawa.
- Sikorska M. (2009), *Nowa matka, nowy ojciec, nowe dziecko. O nowym układzie sił w polskich rodzinach*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa.
- Sillars A.L. (1982), Attribution and communication: Are people "naïve scientists" or just naïve? [in:] Social cognition and communication, eds. M.E. Roloff, C.R. Berger, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA, p. 73–106.
- Strand R., Freeman E. (2015), Scandinavian Cooperative Advantage: The Theory and Practice of Stakeholder Engagement in Scandinavia, "Journal of Business Ethics", no. 127, p. 65–85.
- SSB, Statistics Norway (2015), www.ssb.no/en/folkendrkv (accessed: 18.01.2016).
- Szlendak T. (2010), *Socjologia rodziny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Titkow A., Duch-Krzystoszek D., Budrowska B. (2004), *Nieodpłatna pra-ca kobiet. Mity, realia, perspektywy*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, Warszawa.
- Tosi H.L., Rizzo J.R., Carroll S.J. (1986), *Organizational Behaviour*, New York.
- Tyszka Z. (2002), *Rodzina we współczesnym świecie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań.
- Ubertowski A. (2012), Ja.com, Katowice.
- Wallen K., Lloyd E.A. (2011), Female sexual arousal: Genital anatomy and orgasm in intercourse, "Hormones and Behavior", no. 5, p. 780–792.
- Walser R.D., Westrup D. (2009), *The Mindful Couple. How Acceptance and Mindfulness Can Lead You to the Love You Want*, New Habringer Publications, Inc., Oakland.
- Weiner B. (1995), *Judgements of Responsibility: A Foundation for a Theory of Social Conduct*, Guilford Press, New York.
- Williams M., Penman D. (2014), *Mindfulness. Trening uważności*, Samo Sedno, Warszawa.

- Wincze J.P., Weisberg R.B. (2015), Sexual Dysfunction. Third Edition.

  A guide for Assessment and Treatment, The Guildford Press, New York.
- Wojciszke B. (2009), *Psychologia Miłości*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk.
- Żadkowska M. (2010). Washing machine and dishwasher towards the cultural transformation of a household [in:] Society, Culture and Technology at the Dawn of the 21st Century, eds. J. Mucha, K. Leszczynska, Cambrige Scholars Publishing, Cambridge, p. 91–107.
- Żadkowska M. (2012), Para w praniu. O współczesnej rodzinie i codziennych czynnościach w socjologii Jeana-Claude'a Kaufmanna, "Studia Socjologiczne", nr 2.
- Żadkowska M. (2014), Kiedy para staje się parą? O roli wspólnego zamieszkiwania dla związku na podstawie badań nad trójmiejskimi parami [in:] Socjologia zamieszkiwania, eds. M. Jewdokimow, M. Łukasiuk, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warszawa.



MIGRATIONNAVIGATOR.ORG

† /PARMIGRATIONNAVIGATOR



"The whole of research paper was intersting for both of us, and even enriching (despite the level of our psychological knowledge which is quite high). The manual is based on solid psychological knowledge and one can notice practical experiences of authors.

Authours write beautifully about empathy, building cooperation in everyday life, practicing mindfulness, resolving problems and work proposals in the area of cultural taboo – sex. (...) The whole project (*Manual for couples* and *Manual for trainers*) is an innovative, reasonable act. It is worth building trainers' team around it, to let them master the methodics."

Excrept form editorial review by Jacek Jakubowski and Dorota Szczepan-Jakubowska

Par Navigator. Manual for Couples is a non-typical release. In a cheerful and accessible manner, supported by scientific knowledge, the authors introduce the Reader into the realm of "being in a relationship" in a rewarding way. Not only they describe everyday challenges big and small, but most of all they suggest how to cope with them. However what is the difference between Par Navigator and other guidebooks?! It does not propose "ready to make" recipes to achieve happiness, but rather offers the whole range of the ways to work for a successful relationship. Empirical data in fields of psychology, sociology, family sciences as well as experiences gathered from many couples and trainer's experiences of Authors enabled creating a manual which teaches how to develop new ways of dealing with everyday life making living in a relationship as satisfying as possible.

Excrept form editorial review by Małgorzata Lipowska PhD, University of Gdansk professor











