

Bernardeta LELONEK-KULETA¹

**TOWARDS A MATURE PERSONALITY – FAMILY
AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTIONS
WHICH DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT
OF KAZIMIERZ DĄBROWSKI'S
POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION THEORY**

**Ku dojrzałej osobowości – oddziaływania rodzinne
i środowiskowe warunkujące prawidłowy rozwój człowieka
w świetle Teorii Dezintegracji Pozytywnej
Kazimierza Dąbrowskiego**

Dla Kazimierza Dąbrowskiego autentyczny rozwój oznacza wyjścia poza wyposażenia genetyczne oraz ograniczenia środowiskowe. W tym celu dziecko musi być wychowywane i kształcone w środowisku wzajemnego współczucia, zrozumienia i pozytywnych relacji. Niezbędne dla zdrowej socjalizacji dzieci jest rozpatrywanie ich wyjątkowości i potencjału rozwojowego z pozytywnego punktu widzenia.

¹ **Bernadeta Lelonek-Kuleta**, doktor nauk humanistycznych w zakresie psychologii, adiunkt naukowo-dydaktyczny w Katedrze Zdrowia Publicznego Instytutu Nauk o Rodzinie i Pracy Socjalnej, Wydział Teologii Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II. Specjalizuje się w problematyce patologii społecznej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem uzależnień, w tym – uzależnień czynnościowych i patologicznego hazardu. Prowadzi szkolenia dla terapeutów uzależnień z zakresu terapii patologicznego hazardu, pracuje w Ośrodku Leczenia Uzależnień w Lublinie, w którym wykorzystuje doświadczenia w terapii uzależnień zdobyte we Francji. Autorka licznych publikacji naukowych i popularyzacyjnych dotyczących uzależnień czynnościowych, ich terapii i profilaktyki.

Edukacja dzieci powinna opierać się na kreatywnych adaptacjach standardowych metod nauczania. Nauczyciele powinni sami być wrażliwi, dobrze ukształtowani, ukierunkowani na własny rozwój oraz poszukujący dróg do rozumienia ludzi w różnych podejściach. Kontakt z takimi specjalistami może pomóc dzieciom w odkryciu ich własnego potencjału. Dzieci powinny być zachęcane do rozwijania i podążania za ich wyjątkowo ukształtowaną hierarchią wartości. Adaptacja jest kierowana przez własny potencjał dziecka, jego wartości i cele.

Introduction

The Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) has been developed by Kazimierz Dąbrowski on the basis of a careful observation of the human condition. This observation has led him to the discovery that what is commonly considered a disorder might prove to be something positive, or even prerequisite for a healthy growth. In his works on human development, K. Dąbrowski focuses primarily on its emotional aspect, and also, on what has enjoyed much less scientific interest, namely its spiritual dimension. In his theory, Dąbrowski describes the laws governing healthy human growth and functioning, and explains some behavioural disorders. Nevertheless, the theory would be incomplete if it disregarded the issue of prevention. Therefore, Dąbrowski provides some possible measures to prevent the disorders or, if already present, reduce their consequences, as much as possible.

Following an outline of the TPD, this article examines the relatively unknown findings of Kazimierz Dąbrowski on some broadly-defined preventive measures for children, teenagers and adults. These recommendations refer to actions which are to provide young people with the most effective growth and to minimise the consequences of any disorders which they may develop in an older age.

The Theory of Positive Disintegration – background

The Theory of Positive Disintegration claims that human growth involves advancing into the higher levels of development. The advancement into a higher level is conditional on the relaxation and decomposition of a lower-level psychological structure only to compose it back at a higher level. This decomposition, or disintegration, is therefore a positive phenomenon, as it is a prerequisite for growth, hence the name of the theory². A similar developmental

² Cf. T. Kobierzycki, *Filozofia osobowości od antycznej idei duszy do współczesnej teorii osoby*, Warsaw 2001, p. 215.

approach to crisis is represented i.a. by E.H. Erikson, G. Allport, H. Sęk, and I. Heszen-Niejodek³. In the TPD, each man has the so-called development potential, or the highest level of growth they can possibly achieve under the most favourable conditions. This development potential is the product of three factors – the biological endowment of an individual, their own actions and social milieu or peer pressure.

K. Dąbrowski distinguishes five stages of human development. The first is characterised as Primary Integration, and at this stage disintegration towards growth is virtually impossible. This level is characteristic i.a. of unthinking, self-centred individuals and psychopaths. The second level, known as Unilevel Disintegration, involves the emergence of cracks on the psychic structure in the form of hesitation and doubts, which may encourage growth. At this stage, however, they generally lead to disorders since the level of self-awareness is still rather low and prevents the individual from building on this experience. At the third level, dubbed Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration, disintegrative processes gain momentum. With enhanced self-awareness, which drives an individual towards „a better self,” or the emerging personal ideal, they are used as a basis for growth. What is characteristic of the fourth level, or Directed Multilevel Disintegration, is that individuals redefine themselves and their milieu in a completely conscious and free manner by choosing what they see as important and beneficial. Now, the system of values is precisely defined and well-established, and pursued with strong determination, without experiencing any dilemma as to its suitability. The individual is now fully independent, mature and emphatic. The highest, fifth, level, similarly to the first one, is integrative in nature, although this time it is secondary integration. This level is attained only by few people. It is characterised by a fully developed personality, which does not experience any further disintegration processes, since it has achieved the ultimate in growth. Personality is now organised in a new way, and the individual is not torn between the existing and the expected realities. The individual is in full harmony with the attained personal ideal. According to its author, at its fourth and fifth levels the theory does not admit any disorders or social maladjustment⁴.

³ As cited in: M. Artymiak, *Kryzys niejedno ma imię: psychologiczne oblicza kryzysu*, in: *Człowiek na rozdrożu Zrozumieć, aby pomóc*, ed. Z.B. Gaś, Lublin 2013, pp.113-126.

⁴ K. Dąbrowski, *Multilevelness of emotional and instinctive functions*. Part 1: *Theory and description of levels of behavior*, Lublin 1996.

The TPD in prophylaxis

On the basis of the TPD, the 12th Annual Meeting of the World Federation for Mental Health, held in Barcelona in 1959, formulated conclusions on mental health. The study group led by K. Dąbrowski emphasised the importance of spiritual values as follows:

1. „Spiritual values (...) can be captured in a fairly clear manner by intuition, and in particular by practising and cultivating them. Personal growth provides the opportunity to experience these values, which forms the basis for exploring and appreciating them.

2. The proper integration of spiritual values and their development, especially in children and teenagers, is influenced by the family, school, and professional settings, and in particular the actual practice of these values by parents, educators, doctors and managers in offices and industrial establishments.

3. Mental health is the ability to advance towards a higher system of values, until the perfect social and moral personality is achieved, and is therefore inherent in the integration of moral values.

4. The process of positive disintegration is crucial to the development of personality, and hence to the integration at the subsequent levels of spiritual values.”⁵

K. Dąbrowski believes that mental health and development are conditional on an adequate development potential and increased mental excitability. On the one hand, this endowment allows oneself to create one's own, more or less original, path to perfection, creativity or empathy, but on the other, it can lead to narrow-mindedness or even degeneration. Since this potential can be put to either good or bad end, it is vital to adequately channel the development of an individual. The author claims that: „(...) there seem to be no other development path, no other way to discover new, more profound realities, than the way of disintegration, suffering, positive maladjustment, inhibition, internal creative conflicts, irritability, suicidal tendencies, and, above all, various neuroses and psychoneuroses.”⁶

Consequently, K. Dąbrowski has identified mental hygiene objectives that need to be pursued in relation to different groups of people distinguished in terms of their tendencies to disintegration.

Mental hygiene objectives for healthy people are in particular to provide them with a harmonious and comprehensive development of mental functions

⁵ K. Dąbrowski, *Zdrowie psychiczne a wartości ludzkie*, Warsaw 1974, p. 59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

and to prevent mental disorders. Indeed, mental hygiene should enhance their growth potential by making their mental structures more sensitive. This can be achieved by using stimuli to induce positive disintegration, even if only in its superficial form, but without causing any mental „cracks” which might develop in a rigid mental structure.

In people who exhibit irritability, neurosis or psychoneurosis, it needs to be established what is the type of their mental structure, the key interests and talents, emotional tendencies and moral and social propensities. It is vital to determine the conditions under which these characteristics can benefit a given individual and the society as a whole. It is also important to identify which inclinations, which might be considered as deviations from the accepted standard, will become advantageous to the development of the individual or the community, and which can become harmful; in other terms, which, even though they seem abnormal, need to be amplified, and which are to be weakened. Such persons need to be provided with a suitable internal and external environments to facilitate optimum moral and mental development.

In ill people, who show negative disintegration symptoms, mental hygiene is to provide them with suitable living and working conditions in closed or semi-closed institutions. This objective is even more important given that it cannot always be clearly established whether we are dealing with people who experience disintegrative disorders or patients whose health can still undergo considerable improvement through the crisis⁷.

With psychopathy and character disorders it needs to be established as early and as carefully as possible whether we are dealing with an individual who is susceptible to some positive changes, or one with integrated antisocial tendencies or a psychopath⁸. When the latter is the case, the reason for isolating such an individual would be to secure the society against his or her propensity for aggression and demoralising influence over the community⁹.

The conditions of healthy development in children and teenagers

In his works, K. Dąbrowski often focuses on the conditions of healthy development in children and teenagers, thus considering it a fundamental issue. He

⁷ K. Ostrowska, *Teoria dezintegracji pozytywnej szansą dla resocjalizacji*, in: *Rozwój osoby w Kazimierza Dąbrowskiego teorii dezintegracji pozytywnej*, ed. Cz. Cekiera, I. Niewiadomska, Lublin 1997, p. 114.

⁸ Cf. K. Pospiszyl, *Psychopatia*, Warszawa 1985, p. 14.

⁹ K. Poznański, Lublin 1974, pp. 64-65.

further formulates some essential recommendations regarding mental hygiene measures for children, to be adopted within a family:

1. To provide a healthy somatic and mental environment (prevent prenatal exposure to toxic substances, the appropriate mental health of parents during conception and the suitable mental health of the mother during pregnancy and childbirth).
2. Love for the child, especially on the mother's part, is as important for the mind as food is for the body.
3. It is essential to avoid any gaps and disruptions in the emotional attitude of parents towards the child.
4. To satisfy the basic natural needs of the child and slowly introduce them to the concept of responsibility.
5. To provide the child with a separate bed, personal space (with a closet and a desk) and toys to help the child develop their interests and independence.
6. To provide the child with the opportunity to interact with nature, plants and animals, as well as with the world of fairy tales and fables, as early as possible, while also ensuring their proper form and content. To adjust the appropriate of these two elements to the child's personality type (extroverted or introverted).
7. There can be no major clash between the upbringing systems of the mother, the father and more distant relatives.
8. To avoid showing the child cruelty, both in the real world and in fables and fairy tales, especially when it comes to sensitive children.
9. To avoid exerting influence by means of moralising, in favour of leading by example and through play and appealing to the child's ambition.
10. When slowly introducing the child to the understanding and feeling of injustice and evil, the calm, cheerful and happy stimuli must predominate vastly.
11. Close cooperation and joint effort in the upbringing of the child within the family and at school is of great importance.
12. To avoid the misinterpretation of some symptoms which are normal in sensitive children (sucking on one's thumb, some night-time anxiety and panic attacks, fear of answering questions, mental overexcitability)¹⁰.

K. Dąbrowski emphasises the importance of a warm family atmosphere for children's growth. Children should be raised in an environment filled with harmony, both in external (e.g. own room) and internal (no conflicts, etc.)

¹⁰ 147, pp. 90-91.

terms. Parents are required to be highly sensitive to their children's internal experiences and show a lot of tact, empathy, affection and patience. Dąbrowski also stresses the need for cooperation with school, which is an important child-rearing environment.

In one of his works, the author of the TPD formulates some preventive and educational recommendations for parents and educators, relevant for interactions with teenagers:

1. We should be interested not only in the difficulties and dangers associated with this stage, but also new life experiences and the fact whether these are likely to evolve or rather fade away.
2. Any symptoms of ambivalence or ambitendency, characteristic of teenagers at this age, should not be met with criticism. These often indicate considerable transformations or foreshadow further developmental changes in teenagers, which might prove highly desirable under favourable circumstances.
3. During adolescence we have to try to understand the major developmental symptoms and to recall our own experiences in this respect and to establish a friendly relationship with teenagers, both within our family and at school, while at the same time avoiding intrusive and excessive kindness.
4. Teenagers should be introduced to the fundamental sexual processes characteristic of our species in an individual manner, without going into detail and without comparing the experiences and behaviour of teenagers to similar activities observed in animals. Differences between humans and animals, and their mutual similarities, should be given at least equal attention.
5. Any conflicts within the family or at school should be avoided so as not to amplify the internal struggle experienced by teenagers, since new difficulties, coupled with the existing problems, could in some cases lead to suicidal thoughts or even attempts.
6. Doctors and educators should be aware that during this time a number of pathogenic processes, such as enuresis, pyknolepsy and other, subside on their own. On the other hand, this is also the time when neuroses and psychoneuroses may either arise or become more established, and pre-psychotic states or even psychoses (especially schizophrenia) and suicidal tendencies appear¹¹.

During this stage of development, given the rapid transformations in the teenage psyche, it is vital for parents and educators to be particularly sensitive.

¹¹ K. Dąbrowski, *Spoleczno-wychowawcza psychiatria dziecięca*, Warsaw 1959, p. 37-38.

What is of crucial importance is to take the attitude of acceptance and understanding, to lead by example and to avoid preaching. The rearing environment should be as balanced as possible, without any conflicts, so as not to add to the internal pressure teenagers are experiencing. It is also important to carefully observe young people to prevent any potential disorders from escalating.

Therapeutic measures recommended in the TPD for children with difficulties

On the basis of his theory, K. Dąbrowski provides some advice regarding therapy, treatment and education for individual types of disorders.

If children or teenagers are nervous, adults who work with them should explore this situation, its sources, consequences, the need to overcome any specific forms of nervousness inconsistent with mental development, appropriate means of influence and protection, as well as guiding them towards desirable outcomes in terms of their development and social culture. By becoming acquainted with the issue of nervousness, educators and teachers can also learn how to reach more profound mental mechanisms in children¹².

K. Dąbrowski claims that nervousness constitutes the internal resource of children. Therefore, it should not be approached as having undesirable symptoms and roots, since these cannot be removed. In fact, any attempts to eliminate these without the necessary competence in this phenomenon and all its complicated symptoms, may lead to the development of severe neural disorders and loss of considerable cultural values connected with the nervousness in children and teenagers. Consequently, it is vital to take care that this nervousness does not develop into a severe psychoneurotic or psychotic disorder. In addition, it is necessary to eliminate any excessive forms of overexcitability which may be unpleasant for children and which do not have any beneficial role in the development of their creative faculty. By following the definition of nervousness provided in the TPD, parents should bring order into the lives of their children by taking an appropriate attitude, ensuring a reasonable ratios of work to play and sleep to rest, and either moderating or reinforcing their interests and inclinations in the domain of feelings and desires. Increased excitability should not be subdued, but the child needs to be familiarised with the reality. Children should learn the contact with nature, have the opportunity to rest, enjoy breaks at work and calm down after unsettling experiences. In the event of the predominance of experiences in one area, these should gradually be transferred

¹² K. Dąbrowski, *Nerwowość dzieci i młodzieży*, Warsaw 1976, p.6.

into another domain which could be connected with child's interests, without causing exhaustion or creating or developing consequential disorders.

One of the most important measures in educational prevention and therapy for nervous children is to develop their talents. When enabled and encouraged, these skills become the basis for the development of mental balance in such children. As claimed by the author of the TPD, frequent interactions in the natural environment, travelling, working in the garden, and group play are highly recommended. What is also of considerable importance is the reasonable, competent and patient attitude of parents towards a nervous child, to provide the latter with as much affection as possible, while on the other hand motivating his or her ambition to build up emotional strength. Dąbrowski further stresses the importance of hydrotherapy and balanced diet.¹³

On the basis of his theory, K. Dąbrowski formulates therapeutic recommendations that can be used with children:

1. Learn as much as possible on the disease and developmental mechanisms perceived as disorders.
2. Try to capture all autopsychotherapy mechanisms and activate them.
3. Treat the patient with utmost respect, care and kindness, as someone who, on the one hand, is in the state of imbalance, but on the other may have considerable resources conducive to positive and accelerated growth.
4. Act in consonance and in cooperation with the patient, and at the same time arouse their optimism and self-confidence.
5. Unlock patient's skills and talents, if any, and harness them to cooperation.
6. Reinforce and expand patient's disposition and guidance faculties on the basis of the above-mentioned characteristics, and strive towards their harmony and hierarchical synergy.
7. Gradually overcome any difficulties the patient is facing in their internal, as well as social and family, environments.
8. Be gentle and careful with recommendations and actions.
9. Act in an evocative manner, but in close alignment with the actual capabilities of the patient and in accord with their basic dynamisms.
10. Employ either integrative or disintegrative methods, depending on the type of the patient's psychological profile, nature of the disorder and developmental background.
11. Skilfully and carefully assist the patient on their way from the unilevel to the multilevel disintegration.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 298.

¹⁴ K. Dąbrowski, *Spoleczno-wychowawcza psychiatria dziecięca*, op. cit., pp. 458-459.

It is crucial for parents and educators to establish at an early stage what development potential a child exhibits, to be able to understand it better and act accordingly. A child who shows a negative developmental potential, such as some initial signs of psychopathy (self-centredness, aggression, primitive behaviour, lack of empathy), requires goodwill and affection, and also needs to have their primitive structures relaxed and dissolved through experiences and trial and error.

In the case of a positive development potential, it is vital to provide the child with as well-rounded and balanced a development of their interests and talents as possible, and to drive their growth towards continuously higher values and goals, in line with the individual and group development principles. It is also necessary to gradually build up independence in children in respect of their own growth¹⁵.

Any assistance is to be based on cooperation with the child to activate their autopsychotherapeutic faculties. Dąbrowski rests his arguments on the premise that everyone has at their disposal the tools necessary to help themselves. However, these must be unlocked, and this is the role of psychotherapy.

In his works, the author of the TPD presents his own vision of psychotherapy, which stems directly from his idea of human development. He makes the following claim: „In my opinion, psychotherapy which fails to account for developmental principles and methods, is flawed. A legitimate psychotherapy is the one which is able to identify in any individual their development potential at any stage of development, and on its basis, and by employing each quality individually, channels the individual's development efforts to reduce or attenuate any mental retardation, or advance the so-called healthy mental disorders. As a result, an individual reaches higher levels of reality, higher values and the highest objectives, on their way towards a specific individual and social ideal. Individual educational and psycho-therapeutic systems are to be built on the basis of individual assessment and in consideration of the mental wealth and creative resources of an individual.¹⁶„

In the TPD, each crisis is necessary for positive development. Adequate psychotherapeutic approach is determined by the detailed consideration of individual and specific developmental crises, and by accounting for any positive elements, that is the potential for growing out of these crises.

¹⁵ K. Dąbrowski, *W poszukiwaniu zdrowia psychicznego*, Warsaw 1996, p. 105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

It is impossible to grow, especially in terms of emotions and imagination, when constant mental balance is maintained. Further levels of reality cannot be reached without going through crises – not without experiencing periodic, either short- or long-lasting, states of mental imbalance. No development, and consequently, no psychotherapy, can take place without the process of mental relaxation, or mental breaking, i.e. without positive disintegration¹⁷.

The psychotherapy of anxiety, depression, and obsession needs to be examined for creative and positive elements of accelerated development. The higher the level of mental functioning throughout the anxiety, depression or obsession, the more positive and dynamic development potential it carries. Therefore, psychotherapy must consider any neurosis and psychoneurosis along with their inner potential, and even intensify the psychoneurotic process, provided that this is a creative development intensification which aims at a higher hierarchy of values¹⁸.

Development support methods – „the psychotherapy for healthy people”

K. Dąbrowski also describes some methods for providing development support, which he refers to as the psychotherapy for healthy people. One type of such a psychotherapy is the psychotherapy through mental sensitivisation, which can be achieved on various levels:

1. Becoming more sensitive to oneself and one's environment.

Positive disintegration builds an internal mental environment and develops a personal hierarchy of values. This hierarchy ensures an appropriate, creative attitude to oneself, while generating the motivation towards one's own, developing, higher „self”, and the dislike for the lower „self”. The development of the higher „self” is usually connected with becoming more responsive to others and to the environment, with the urge to help other people, which translates into further personality growth. The fact of becoming more considerate towards oneself and others results in an attentive attitude to the development of oneself and others, while also arousing enthusiasm for development and, at the same time, criticism towards all underdeveloped structures. This increase in sensitivity is a fundamental factor in accelerated human growth.

2. Becoming more sensitive to one's own interests and talents, but also to the interests and talents of others.

¹⁷ T. Kobierzycki, *Filozofia osobowości...*, op. cit., p. 215.

¹⁸ K. Dąbrowski, *W poszukiwaniu zdrowia psychicznego*, op. cit., p. 89.

According to Dąbrowski, interests and talents are among the crucial determinants of human development. He claims that they should serve as the reference point for any psychotherapist and any man who pursues their own development. In its broad sense, creativity is the most important factor in personality development, hence also in achieving higher levels of mental health.

3. Becoming more sensitive to the internal mental environment.

Rich internal psychic milieu is a precondition for multi-level mental development. With the support of their loved ones, friends, psychologist and educators, any person undergoing development will diversify their multi-level internal environment, explore this environment, and assess objectively and in detail the majority of dynamics driving them at their current stage of development. Using retrospection and foresight, they will notice their shortcomings and virtues, and recognize certain dynamisms at the levels above and below the one they are currently at. Jointly with their therapists, they can now establish individual growth programmes, with particular attention to any deficiencies and prominent elements in their external mental environment. Orientation in this environment, more dynamic attitude towards it, and growing self-awareness allow them to choose the most appropriate development methods for themselves and development-assistance methods for others. This is the result of obtaining a deep insight into oneself and getting to know the others. In this way, people can use their own internal experiences to help others by relating these experiences to those of other people.

4. Becoming more sensitive to the suffering of other people.

The development of one's own and other people's internal environments facilitates a better understanding of the world as a whole, and makes people more attentive to the needs and suffering of others. In consequence, the fortunes and experiences of others become our own. Being worried about someone, concerned for someone, and urged to provide them with support are all important elements of psychotherapy. Being responsive to deprivation, suffering, harm and humiliation leads to the relaxation of mental structures, which is required for development. Such an increased sensitivity also creates the sense of responsibility for others, for the group, and, at a later stage, creates the need to establish the most appropriate programmes and forms of assistance, and to either take direct action or act through social institutions.

5. Becoming more sensitive to art.

The TPD considers art as one of the key means of psychotherapy. For sensitized people it becomes a „psychotherapist” in its own right. Deeply-emotional experiences, resulting from the identification with various characters and the

projection of one's experiences onto fictional characters, as well as the impact of music, painting or sculpture, provide the sense and experience of the hierarchy of values and arouse strong developmental drives, and also attention to other people's suffering, and to the highest individual and social virtues. The more impressive and versatile the art, the greater its impact on human development and on transcending the biological cycle and other vital cycles.

6. Becoming more sensitive to philosophy.

K. Dąbrowski mentions the so-called developmental philosophy, which grows within a man through the development of the internal mental environment. It manifests itself through the attention to values and specific growth ideals. This philosophy is never purely objective but rather draws on one's own feelings and is based on experience, suffering, and breakdown, but also enthusiasm on one's way towards the ideal. In other words, this is the philosophy of pursuing one's personality, which expresses the process of growth. It is the manifestation of the multi-faceted and multi-level positive disintegration which leads to higher levels of development¹⁹.

Summary

To sum up the opportunities for practical applications of the TPD in preventive and therapeutic development stimulation, it is important to note the recommendations for work with children and teenagers, including maladjusted individuals. Dąbrowski has specified the conditions that need to be met for the positive disintegration methods to be used.

The first requirement, which is independent from the external environment, is the mental susceptibility to relaxation, which is prerequisite for growth. Crisis experiences, are also considered by other authors as developmental pre-conditions, but Dąbrowski stresses that relaxation itself, even if present, does not always have to be developmental in nature²⁰. Disintegrative processes need appropriate guidance to serve developmental purposes. Otherwise, they might lead to some serious disorders. In the TPD, individuals with negatively-integrated mental structures are not susceptible to any changes, including therapeutic interactions, and should therefore be isolated. Nevertheless, it seems justified to use other rehabilitation methods for such subjects, since everyone deserves a chance to change.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 90-93.

²⁰ S. Steuden, *Wzrastanie człowieka w aspekcie psychicznym*, in: *Ja-Człowiek Wzrastanie w godności, miłości i miłosierdziu*, ed. M. Kalinowski, Lublin 2004, pp. 19-35.

Work with children who exhibit disintegration is based mainly on an individual approach. Such work should be designed in line with the nature of the disintegrative processes. If their nature is negative, and such a young person shows signs of maladjustment, they should be provided with individual contact with an experienced therapist. It is also important for the professional to cooperate with parents and educators. The interaction with the young individual should be based on acceptance, understanding, kindness, respect and sensitivity. The therapist should seek to determine the development potential of the patient and adjust the therapy accordingly. If possible, the professional should agree on the individual growth programme with the individual. In their interactions with the therapist, patients have the opportunity to discover their internal mental environment, explore their self-awareness, recognize their „good” and „bad” sides, and relate to their drives. This can lead to a healthy sense of guilt, and, consequently, inspire the desire to change their behaviour and the motivation to overcome their inclinations and to work towards self-improvement.

It is important to introduce peace and order into the life of the individual. This is where family is of key importance. Dąbrowski believes that whenever it is not possible to place the individual in a family environment, it is highly recommended that an equally-stimulating community be found. It is also important to isolate them from any demoralising peer groups. The individual should have their free time organised and be provided with contact with nature and animals, physical activity to reduce stress, and trips and travel to make them more worldly. Environmental influence on the development of young people is also emphasised by other professionals²¹.

It is also highly advisable to interact with the young individual through art to sensitise their psyche. After learning about the subjects' talents and interests, these can be used to engage them in painting, sculpting or other activities. Group classes are also recommended to overcome self-centredness and to develop consideration for others.

In his theory, K. Dąbrowski attempted to identify different opportunities for employing the TPD in work with maladjusted and other teenagers. The primary role in such a work is played by an experienced therapist or parent

²¹ Cf. B. Lelonek-Kuleta, *Rola rodziny w zapobieganiu i leczeniu uzależnień*, „Ate-neum Kapłańskie” 2013, z. 1(626), Vol. 161, pp. 32-46; B. Parysiewicz, *Znaczenie rodziny w przeciwdziałaniu patologiom społecznym*, in: *Czas rodziny – czas nadziei*, ed. U. Dudziak, Lublin 2012, pp. 131-149; T. Vec, *Praca z rodzicami dzieci z zaburzeniami emocjonalnymi i zaburzeniami zachowania*, in: *Dzieci ulicy*, ed. G. Olszewska – Baka, Białystok 2000, pp. 114-115.

who should be characterised by a considerable sensitivity to their own internal mental environment. Dąbrowski refers to such people as counsellors and defines the following profile of such professionals: „A positive disintegration counsellor must have a special training, which combines psychology, pedagogics, psychiatry, sociology, and even, to some extent, philosophy. They should also be familiar with the Positive Disintegration Theory. An individual with such an education usually has a multifaceted and multi-level attitude and understands that it is unreasonable to use methods based solely on one school of thought”²². Aside from expertise, a considerable importance is given to the therapist’s intrinsic predispositions: „Apart from this, such a counsellor also needs to have specific personality traits, namely they need to have a developing personality and special traits and characteristics which will allow them to fulfil their role”²³. Without such predispositions the assistance they provide will not be fully successful. Appropriate characteristics provide the professional with a detailed insight into the patient’s mind, its dynamisms and development capacity. Therefore, as emphasised by a number of professionals, on the one hand the efficiency of the assistance depends on the therapist, and on the other, on the subject’s profile (disintegration symptoms)²⁴.

Finally, it is important to note what form of work is considered by Dąbrowski as the best. Due to the complexity of personality-development issues, the most important is group work: „(..) The work of a multi-disciplinary team, an institution of sorts, which could, by sharing opinions and cooperation, attempt to address the most challenging cases in terms of development and its psychopathology, under the circumstances that could not be handled by a single, even highly-qualified, professional”²⁵.

²² K. Dąbrowski, *Osobowość i jej kształtowanie poprzez dezintegrację pozytywną*, Lublin 1984, p. 179.

²³ Ibid., p. 179.

²⁴ Cf. J. Cichowicz, *Niedostosowanie społeczne dzieci i młodzieży*, „Studia i Materiały” 1992, No. 35, pp. 15-16; B. Czupryn, *Dojrzewanie młodzieży – antropologiczna perspektywa dojrzałości*, in: *Nauczyciel wobec problemów globalnego nastolatka*, Lublin 2012, pp. 11-27; I. Niewiadomska, *Wspieranie rozwoju człowieka w okresie dorastania*, in: *Ja-Człowiek Wzrastanie w godności, miłości i miłosierdziu*, op. cit., pp. 155-168; L. Pytka, T. Zacharuk, *Zaburzenia przystosowania społecznego dzieci i młodzieży*, Siedlce 1995, p. 52.

²⁵ K. Dąbrowski, *Osobowość i jej kształtowanie poprzez dezintegrację pozytywną*, op. cit., p. 181.

Bernadeta Lelonek-Kuleta: Towards a mature personality – family and environmental interactions which determine the appropriate human development in the light of Kazimierz Dąbrowski's Positive Disintegration Theory.

For Kazimierz Dąbrowski, authentic development means going beyond the genetic endowment and environmental constraints. To this end, the child must be brought up and educated in an environment of mutual compassion, understanding, and positive relationships. It is essential for their healthy socialization to approach children's uniqueness and developmental potential from a positive point of view.

The education of children should include creative adaptations of standard methods of teaching. Teachers should themselves be sensitive, well-formed, oriented towards self-development and seeking ways to understand humans in different schools of thought. Interactions with such professionals help children discover their own potential. Children must be encouraged to develop and follow their uniquely crafted hierarchy of values. Adaptation is directed by the child's own potential, values, and aims.