

# International Journal of Human Sciences Research

## THE USE OF FAIRY TALES IN HYBRID PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE WITH CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** With the Covid-19 pandemic, the limitations imposed by social isolation required immediate adaptation from psychologists when continuing their care, especially with young children accustomed to playing and exploring. This work aims to describe the use of fantasy and adapted play resources as alternatives for rescuing the therapeutic process of 22 children, aged between 5 and 10 years, monitored through care based on individual play therapy. Throughout the hybrid services, it was possible to observe, at each session, an increase in responsiveness to the alternative elements created, as well as a strengthening of the patient-therapist bond. From the beginning of the work, interacting with patients, the therapist creates a narrative from which mystical characters begin to serve as auxiliary egos, supporting children in their uncertainties, anxieties and motivating the sharing of emotions. Over time, the tale is named “The Fairy of Behavior” and strengthened with the structuring of figurative creatures theorized based on Jungian archetypes and typology. To ensure the acceptance and sharing of such emotions also in the family context, a methodology based on these mystical elements was created to be applied in the form of parental mentoring. Significant results were obtained by the families, which reverberated in the school environment and generated the demand presented by the participants, for the publication of the story and expansion of the work to the educational context. After a few months, the work expanded as a method and was extended to more patients and several psychologists under clinical supervision, who began using the material. With the necessary adaptations and inclusion of creative games, the method was applied experimentally in two different school groups composed of 32 children between 5 and 11 years of age.

**Keywords:** Fairy tales; Playful resources;

## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it a series of challenges for the healthy psychological development of children, due to the restrictions imposed by social isolation, the abrupt change of environment and the perception of concerns related to their role models. These factors hindered healthy psychic evolution, especially at a crucial moment of development that involves living with other people. (FORBES and CARO, 2021).

Studies have shown dysfunctional behaviors frequently presented during the pandemic, such as fear, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, boredom, feelings of loneliness, irritability and changes in sleep and eating, difficulties that children have little coping repertoire for as they are at a stage of neurodevelopment. important in which the understanding of reality is restricted. (FIOCRUZ, 2020b).

Contributions to understanding communication through a systemic approach were essential to understanding the changes that communication patterns have undergone in this pandemic period, since the difference between what is said and how it is said can point to numerous communication problems that arise of the inconsistencies between these aspects. Furthermore, verbal and non-verbal communication can contradict each other, generating conflicts and misunderstandings, creating the need to understand communication from a systemic perspective. (WATZLAWICK, 2007).

In the search for alternatives for hybrid sessions that understood the characteristics of child development, priority was given, in clinical practice, to a therapeutic approach permeated by playful elements and based on narrative with mystical characters who were

introduced as auxiliary egos that favored, in each session, increased responsiveness to the alternative elements created, as well as strengthening the patient-therapist bond.

A tale designed to truly capture a child's attention not only seeks to entertain and awaken their curiosity, but also plays a key role in enriching their life. To fulfill this mission, the narrative must go further, stimulating the child's imagination, contributing to intellectual development and emotional clarity. An enriching narrative harmonizes with the child's anxieties and aspirations, recognizing their difficulties and offering suggestions to overcome the challenges that trouble them. The story must fully relate to all aspects of the child's personality, never underestimating the child, but, on the contrary, giving full credit for their potential development. (BETTELHEIM, 2002).

According to the author, to overcome psychological challenges inherent to growth, such as narcissistic disappointments, Oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries and develop a sense of individuality and self-worth, the child needs to understand their unconscious self. This understanding is not achieved through rational analysis, but rather through prolonged daydreams, in which the child reflects, reorganizes and fantasizes about elements of the story that resonate with their unconscious pressures. Fairy tales play a crucial role in this process, providing children with new dimensions for their imagination, as well as structures and shapes that guide their fantasies, allowing a better direction for their lives.

Fairy tales have the essential purpose of describing a singular psychic phenomenon, however, the complexity, difficulty and abstraction of this phenomenon in its various aspects require a period for its complete assimilation into consciousness. This phenomenon, designated by Jung as SELF,

represents the psychic totality of an individual and, intriguingly, functions as the central regulatory point of the collective unconscious. (FRANZ, 1990).

According to the author, each individual and society experiences this psychic reality in different ways, and fairy tales offer a variety of perspectives that address different phases of this experience. In the context of archetypes, it is crucial to highlight that there is no hierarchy of values between these tales. Each archetype, in essence, represents only one aspect of the collective unconscious, while simultaneously symbolizing this psychic realm as a whole.

This way, fairy tales convey to children the essential message that the struggle against serious difficulties is inescapable and is an intrinsic part of the human experience. However, it is noteworthy that, by firmly facing unexpected and often unfair oppression, it is possible to overcome obstacles and emerge victorious. This symbolic teaching offers the child guidance on how to deal with challenges, mature in a safe way, in addition to offering tools for the child to explore and understand their internal world in a deeper way. (BETTELHEIM, 2002).

The symbolic function, the capacity for enchantment and the duality still intertwined between the real and the fantasy present in the child's way of seeing the world, occupy a primordial place in the child's maturation, just as fantasy occupies in the configuration of the personality, in a process simultaneously individual and social. (PIAGET, 1976).

The child, by itself, does not have the ability to independently follow the path of learning. The intervention of mediators is essential to boost its development. In addition to offering help, it is essential to not only recognize, but also challenge, provoke, instruct and, ultimately, actively guide the child's developmental process. (VIGOTSKI, 2007).

The constructed narrative is based on the constructs of overcoming and resilience, addressing the journey of eight elves who faced emotional difficulties.

This story of overcoming each elf gave rise to the short story entitled: “The Fairy of Behavior”.

The structuring of the story’s narrative is based on solid epistemological foundations, such as Jungian psychology (Psychological Types and Archetypes), Sociocultural Theory and the Systemic Approach. In this context, the presence of the Fairy and the elves can be interpreted as symbolic representations of the healing and transformation processes.

Fantasy allows children to communicate, express their anxieties and thoughts, so that they can transform the real world according to their desires. Through the imaginary, it gives new meaning to the environment itself, which now has different configuration possibilities in a process of constant interaction between the real and fantasy world. (FARIAS and RUBIO, 2012).

## **SYNOPSIS OF THE TALE**

The chosen short story that guided all the work developed was “A FADA DO COMPORTAMENTO” by Francisco Bárbaro Neto, published for the first time in 2021.

Fairies and elves, mythological beings classified as elementals due to their connection with nature, play a vital role in the balance and harmony of the environment. The Fairy of Behavior, specifically, is dedicated to observing and ensuring the well-being of everyone, especially elves and children.

The character of the Fairy of Behavior welcomed elves with challenging behaviors and emotional difficulties, identifying a similarity between them: they all felt like they were a nuisance to their families and friends. At first, it was difficult to find an individual solution to their difficulties and suffering.

Living with the elves, the Fairy noticed their tendencies to easily get involved in trouble. She further noted that she possessed the characteristics, interests and abilities of each of them. Based on this understanding, she created an action plan to develop her socio-emotional skills. Over months of care and support, the elves evolved, becoming more resilient, emotionally intelligent and experts in the behaviors that previously caused them difficulties.

The tale investigates the elves’ transformative journey under the careful guidance of the Behavior Fairy, highlighting the importance of external support in overcoming behavioral challenges and strengthening and developing socio-emotional skills.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF ELVES**

Each elf has specific colors that represent its personality and symbolic and archetypal aspects, based on the 16 Jungian psychological types that were condensed into the 8 characters of the story: Yellow Goblin, Orange Goblin, Red Goblin, Purple Goblin, Pink Goblin, Green Goblin, Turquoise Goblin and Blue Goblin. The Fairy, represented by White, is the sum of the colors of the color wheel and, in turn, the characteristics of the 8 elves present in the story’s narrative (BÁRBARO NETO, 2021).

Elves have two most significant emotions, some guiding aspects of their psychological characteristics, a main motto, hobbies and preferences as a whole (BÁRBARO NETO, 2023).

The Yellow Goblin is extroverted, uses sensation as its main function and has thought as an auxiliary function. Furthermore, he has a personality marked by an open mind, optimism and good humor. With quick and practical reasoning, he demonstrates the ability to express himself and stand out in

social environments, often being the life of the party. Has a passion for new things.

However, due to focusing on your own desires, you can inadvertently hurt people by neglecting your personal needs and limits. Therefore, they constantly seek to improve their self-perception to avoid arrogant attitudes or negative impacts on others. Regarding emotions, the incessant search for JOY can sometimes turn into ENVY when you realize that someone is enjoying something they have not yet experienced. He likes fruits like açaí and fruit do conde. Their motto is: “The perfect time is now”.

The Orange Duende is introspective and his predominant attitude is his thinking. This elf's intuition is used as an aid in decision-making. Demonstrates an unmatched passion for learning, finding satisfaction in immersing herself in interesting subjects. His style of approach is often described as realistic, focusing not just on positives or negatives, but rather on probabilities based on facts.

Having a rational approach as a characteristic, he is not overwhelmed by anxiety when faced with problems, seeing them as challenges to be embraced. However, his more objective perspective can create a disconnect in social interactions, as most people are driven by personal and emotional motives, something he has difficulty fully understanding. Aware of this difference, he strives to improve self-control.

His main emotions are: ANXIETY, when he realizes that they don't understand his way of being and INTEREST, which makes him dive into a subject forgetting everything that is around him. He likes to play video games, read, play sports, skateboard and loves party sweets, bananas and strawberry smoothies. His motto is: “for every problem there is a solution”.

On the other hand, the extroversion of the Red Goblin is the only characteristic that

differs from the Orange Goblin, in relation to the psychological profile. Furthermore, Red is recognized for its responsibility and pragmatism, standing out for its preference for what is right and fair. Rules play a crucial role in his life, and when they are absent, he does not hesitate to create them to promote order and equity. Your propensity for action overcomes the tendency for reflection, prioritizing the execution of what needs to be done. Aware of his assertive characteristics, he invests efforts in training emotional control. This aims to develop greater tolerance, reducing abrupt or impatient attitudes.

His emotions are: ANGER, which he feels when they don't do what needed to be done, and SATISFACTION, when he manages to perform a task with excellence. He likes sports games as well as sports and games with rules. His favorite foods are guacamole, stuffed tomatoes and chocolate with pepper. The motto is: “make decisions with patience and efficiency”.

The Pink Duende is extroverted and has a predominant attitude of feeling, making little use of thought to make decisions and, rather, using sensation as an auxiliary function. Its characteristics stand out for its affinity in interacting with people, always attentive to collective well-being. Staying in tune with her surroundings, she is dedicated to promoting peace and harmony everywhere she goes. Despite her kind nature and propensity to work in a team, she reveals an organized and meticulous side, valuing order in her activities. His constant training involves strengthening self-esteem, seeking the necessary confidence to not be easily shaken by criticism.

She tries not to dramatize situations, especially when she feels DISGUSTED, but, on the other hand, the second most present emotion in this profile is the ease of putting herself in someone else's shoes, EMPATHY. She enjoys collaborative games, music and

parties. She loves to eat apples, pasta and ice cream. Her motto is: “together we are stronger”.

The Purple Duende, on the other hand, is introspective and uses feelings as her main function, leaving thoughts aside and using sensations to help her make decisions. She stands out for her loyalty, peaceful nature and serenity, seeking an environment free from pressure and rigid rules. She values the freedom to express her creativity, finding relief in accomplishing tasks in her unique way. Despite preferring artistic expression as a means of communication, she faces challenges in building self-confidence to overcome insecurities and fears when positioning herself in front of people. Her main emotions are: FEAR, of thinking she is not good enough and RELIEF, when realizing that her work contributed to something important for everyone. She likes to eat cotton candy, cupcakes, peaches, and has preferences for drawing, painting, writing and swimming. Its motto is: “we can create and transform everything around us”.

Being introspective and using feeling as its main function and intuition as an aid, the Turquoise Duende has a highly innovative nature and is constantly engaged in thinking of ways to improve the world to promote global harmony. Routine and detailed tasks are not her preferences. The desire to see happiness in others and discomfort in the face of conflict reflect your genuine concern for the well-being of others. The main emotions are: DESIRE, to make dreams come true and make a difference in people’s lives, which contrasts with the intensity of SADNESS, when there are fights or misunderstandings between people. The elf loves gardening, pottery, playing instruments and eating tangerines, pea soup, Romeo and Juliet. Its motto is: “accept who we are, to accept who the other is”.

The Green Goblin is extroverted and

driven by enthusiasm. It uses intuition as its main function and feeling as an auxiliary one. She has a creative mind and is always looking for new ideas and solutions. Known for thinking quickly, she loves participating in stimulating debates. She needs to be careful not to DISREGARD people and their ideas, as she believes that her own concepts are the best in the world. She feels great EXCITING, especially when it comes to new things and possibilities of doing different things. She loves traveling, discovering new cultures, new habits and eating pears, gnocchi and cashews. Its motto is defined by: it is changes that make us evolve.

Finally, the Blue Goblin is shy and introspective, his predominant attitude that guides his actions are thought and sensation, in an auxiliary way. He tends to be calm and reserved when he is not among friends and is easy to learn and does not like surprises or poorly planned things. However, it trains the ability to adapt to surprises. Their main emotions are: DOUBT, in knowing how people work and what is behind their behavior and TRIUMPH, in discovering a different way of doing and completing tasks. He enjoys solitary activities such as building things, playing video games, doing experiments and looking at the stars. His favorite foods are casserole, corn popsicle and fruit salad. The motto that defines it is: “the greatest victory is our overcoming”.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This work aims to describe the use of the short story A Fada do Comportamento and adapted playful resources as alternatives for rescuing the therapeutic process of children in the hybrid format, as well as parental education.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, a fairy tale and playful resources were used as a strategy, initially constructed with 1 child and, later, expanded to 21 more children, aged between 5 and 10 years through services based on individual play therapy at a Psychology Institute. Particular.

These resources include toys, games, drawings, stories and other materials that were built according to the needs of each child, whether due to the cognitive complexity or the social dimension of the activities. They were used as therapeutic tools to facilitate the expression, exploration and resolution of emotional and behavioral problems.

During individual play therapy sessions based on the "Behavior Fairy" methodology, the child is invited to interact with the fairy and with adapted complementary play resources. The therapist acts as a facilitator, observing and interpreting the child's play, providing emotional support and helping the child develop coping, self-expression and problem-solving skills.

Parental education was used with the parents or guardians of all children covered by the Fada do Comportamento methodology.

The initial anamnesis and a questionnaire applied after 9 to 12 months of using the method during the period of social isolation in the 2020/2021 Pandemic were used as parameters for data analysis.

## RESULTS

To consolidate the results found during the play therapy sessions, the initial anamnesis interview carried out with the parents or guardians was used as a reference, in which various dimensions of behavior and emotions were investigated, as well as the complaint or therapeutic demand for seeking treatment.

The results after 9 to 12 months of follow-up for each of the 22 children who underwent

the Fairy of Behavior's therapeutic method, 14 females and 8 males, pointed to a significant joint improvement in clinical complaints: 76% for anxiety, anguish and mood changes, 80% in irritability, 72% in tolerance to frustration and fears, 78% in manias and tics, 68% showed improvement in conduct and interaction and, finally, 71% had more adaptive responses to opposition and challenge.

The results by gender indicated that 91% of girls showed remission of irritability while this behavior was observed in 62% of boys. However, the improvement in the level of distress in boys reached 85% as opposed to the 71% found in girls. Other behavioral patterns also observed clinically showed improvements, according to the parents, as well as concentration, restlessness, boredom, feelings of loneliness and changes in sleep.

It was possible to observe that the playful resources used allowed children to have fun, learn essential negotiation skills, frustration tolerance, self-control, cooperation, problem solving, perception of others, as well as improving the expression of emotions and thoughts.

Furthermore, there was a greater engagement of parents in the therapeutic process as well as the relevance of their children's educational practices when they realized the real needs for help based on internal demands that were not observed.

## DISCUSSION

Narratives play a significant role in children's acquisition of written language and oral interpretation skills. This reading has a beneficial influence, being fundamental for students. Teachers as well as parents play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of this approach, and must be aware of the decoding difficulties faced in the initial phase of literacy, still in the process of developing fluent reading. Reading aloud stands out for

providing advantages in the syntactic and lexical understanding of written language.

The repercussion of the use of the story proved to be significant and was obtained through feedback from families, which reverberated in the school environment and generated the demand presented by the participants, for the publication of the story and expansion of the work to the educational context. After a few months, the work expanded as a method and was extended to more patients and several psychologists under clinical supervision, who began using the material and methodology with the necessary adaptations and inclusion of creative games created by the author of the story. The method was applied experimentally in two different school groups composed of 62 children between 5 and 11 years of age.

This Fairy tale became a book and, more recently, there is a collection of 10 volumes, giving rise to the Socio-Emotional Education Program “The Behavior Fairy and the SUPERação Team”.

The book is currently in its 3rd edition and is published in three Portuguese-speaking countries.

## CONCLUSION

Play therapy, using the children’s story The Behavior Fairy, had the role of assisting in strategic and assertive emotional support, collaborating in the recognition and correction of introjected distortions of children’s emotions and feelings.

By allowing children to engage with the world around them, play stimulates imagination, promotes the discovery of flexible ways to use objects, and develops problem-solving skills, preparing them for future adult roles. Playful activities positively influenced all aspects of development, from stimulating the senses to visual-motor coordination, eutonic consciousness, decision-making and

the acquisition of new socio-emotional skills.

In the real world as in the fairy tale, the presence of the adult as a mediating figure is essential. One of the most relevant aspects of the fairy tale is its transformative capacity to speak, metaphorically, about the family structure and its natural psychic conflicts in human beings, such as the fear of death and the difficulty in regulating affections.

The chosen story in question, which has as its premise developing resilience through a narrative engendered by archetypal patterns, allowed children and adults to project themselves into the story and identify with the characters and their trajectory of isolation, suffering and search for overcoming their difficulties. emotional and behavioral difficulties, which was favored by the story and the historical moment with the numerous developments during the pandemic.



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