



The social therapeutic climate as a fundamental building block



Therapeutic environment (definition of Janzing and Kerstens):

A therapeutic environment is an organized treatment facility where a situation is created whereby one patient is enabled to a group of patients and therapists. These relationships provide the patient with sufficient room to come to a solution for his/her problems while taking his/her possibilities and limitations into account. Problems can vary in degree of complexity and cover different areas of life.

A SOCIAL THERAPEUTIC WORKING MODEL DAYTREATMENT CENTRE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

1. Introduction

At the Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees the delivery of care is offered at an early stage. In their treatment the Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees makes use of various complementary forms of therapy aimed at coming to terms with trauma, activation, release, and relaxation. This means that besides social therapy, other therapeutic interventions such as psychomotor therapy, creative therapy, music therapy and group psychotherapy are used. Furthermore, techniques such as relaxation and desensitization are used.

2. Social therapy

Within the social therapeutic framework the definition of the Commission Buis (1977) is used:

The definition is as follows:

Social therapy is the methodical management of the social environment for a group of clients aimed at the treatment goals of a group, which can then be seen as a means to achieve the treatment goals of the individual client.

3.1. Social therapy at a Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The Commission Buis was inspired by the model of Kok (1973) which discerns three strategies. These strategies offer a good framework to describe social therapy at a Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

First-degree strategy:

The creation, maintenance, and adjustment of the conditions so that a social therapeutic climate can arise that can be managed in a social therapeutic manner. At team level consensus must exist about the starting points of a social therapeutic climate.

These starting points are:

- The strategic environment: the building, the interior, material provisions.
- The dynamic environment: the clients, the staff members and their mutual relationships
- The relationship between both: the organizational structure

An important aspect within the framework of the first-degree strategy is: collaboration.

At the Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees these starting points are conferred on by way of: team consultation, supervision, pooling, and daily consultation.

The second-degree strategy:

The organized and methodological treatment interventions aimed at a group of clients. Key element in this is the participation of the client in the therapy program. The program should also consist of therapeutic elements that are social therapeutic in nature. These elements are present at the Daytreatment Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. The week is opened by discussions on goals, social orientation based on a theme, and the weekend preliminary talk with group evaluation. The means which the social therapist uses with this strategy belong to methodological group work.

The third-degree strategy:

Making an individual assessment and suiting this to the abilities of a client. The group is a means by which the individual treatment goals can be achieved. The objective is to bring about an optimal effect for each individual. It can thus be the case that a client makes an appointment that falls outside of his treatment plan, or in another case needs and receives more personal care. It is vital to monitor the individual accent shifts without disturbing the atmosphere within the therapeutic climate as a whole.

3.2. The social therapeutic environment

The social therapeutic environment provides conditions and has counseling aspects. It revolves around a group process while taking the specific treatment goals of an individual client into account. The aspects of safety and trust are basic elements. The refugee comes from an unsafe situation and has undergone traumatic experiences. This causes violation of basic trust. Moreover, the refugee encounters problems resulting from migration. Therefore, the social climate should be used in a purposeful (methodological) and optimal manner. Collective lunches and coffee/tea breaks can contribute to creating a safe and familiar atmosphere. Individual treatment plans are used which are determined multi-disciplinarily and are the result of intake, assessment and diagnostic evaluations. Treatment is aimed at optimizing the mental condition of the refugee. Besides the individual treatment plans and the therapy programs, the house rules are also used to regulate day to day life. The house rules make clear where the limits are in connection with the peace and quiet of daily life. Within these limits a flexible attitude is adopted.

3.3. The social therapist

The social therapist is responsible for the professional manner in which social therapeutic interventions are used and can influence the atmosphere in a therapeutic sense. This can imply:

- stimulating a safe climate
- stimulating awareness in a group and in the individual
- stimulating active participation
- recognizing sources of tension and intervening accordingly
- making an inventory of and recording and discussing all relevant information connected to treatment.

Furthermore the social therapist has an overview of all social therapeutic interventions and sees to it that these form a cohesive and integrated entirety. Last but not least it is important that the social therapist has good social skills and the capability to self reflect..

4. Literature (translated from Dutch into English)

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