

## **Therapy by means of creative self expression**

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*The name of my psychotherapeutic method is therapy by means of creative self expression [1, 2]. This method has proved particularly effective in cases of Personality (characterological) Neurotic, Borderline and Schizotypal, Schizophrenic Disorders – with a painful feeling of one's own inferiority.*

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The essence of therapy by means of creative self expression lies in the fact that during individual meetings with the doctor, group sessions as well as at home and realistic psychotherapeutic theatre the patients study the elements of clinical Psychiatry, Characterology, Psychotherapy and Natural history in order to learn to express themselves creatively, each according to his natural peculiar features. So, the patients learn to perform any moral task consciously in their own way and in accordance with their spiritual individuality. In this process the person becomes more of himself, more creative and, consequently, a more inspired person even in his profession. And the patient becomes the clinical psychotherapist for himself. A little, of course.

This is an important difference of the Method with Existential Humanistic Psychotherapy – psychotherapy by means of the personality growth and the gaining of the sense of living (Fromm, Maslow, Rogers, Frankl, Bugental). Unlike existential-humanistic approaches I help the patient to grow spiritually, to find himself as an autistic, psychasthenic, synthonic, schizotypal etc. person. However the patient remains his unique self – as each of us is unique within frameworks of being male or female, old man or youth. The character, clinical chronic picture is not a label or score for me. It's an orienting point for deeper creative self expression.

I do realise that such adherence to the constitution, the clinical picture in Kretschmer's way, looks more simple may be more earthly (but not primitive), than the existential-humanistic approach. I think, this is the kind of realistic essence of our traditional Russian Clinical psychotherapy. Clinical Psychotherapy is mainly based on the constitution peculiarities and clinical picture. Such a psychotherapeutic approach is lively realistic (inspired and materialistic). It's good for many Russian realistic anxious patients, Anthon Chehov patients. It goes not from Spirit, but from Nature.

But the Method provides the idealistic, autistic patient with an opportunity to try creatively his own personality in different areas of the culture life. The Method provides to feel his own accordance with different personality trends in painting, philosophy etc. And maybe to find his own philosophical idealistic, religious way that is curable in the highest sense.

The group sessions take place in a cosy atmosphere of “the psychotherapeutic drawing-room” (with tea, candles and soft music).

The group sessions in a cosy atmosphere include an explanatory and educational study of the certain psychopathological disorders (obsession, anxiety, depression, de-personalisation etc.) and characters of people –with a striving to understand one’s own and other people’s characters, disorders as far as possible. Usually when a person has a serious illness, he wants to know the clinical truth about his disease. So, we teach our patients elements of science, but by means of creative self-expression. What is it?

Through harmony with other people capable of such harmony, with certain works of fiction, art and science, through harmony with certain trees, grasses and animals, through one’s own creation (creating works) – a person gets to know himself better as the particular character or the particular mosaic of characters. And, this is the main thing, a person sees his socially useful life-path more clearly and happy. This is creative inspiration and this is Love. For me, for my patients this is an attempt not only to become happy, but to become happy in one’s own way: syntonik way, autistic way, psychasthenic way, schizophrenic way etc.

The different modes of creative therapy which interlace with each other and dissolve in each other (like in a Kaleidoscope), used during group sessions, are as follows:

1. Therapy by means of creating works;
2. by means of a creative contact with nature;
3. by means of creative engaging in literature, science and the fine arts;
4. by means of collecting something creatively;
5. by immersing creatively in the past;
6. by means of keeping a diary and notebooks;
7. by contacting the doctor by correspondence;
8. therapy by means of travel also used creatively;
9. by means of creative searching for inspiration in ordinary everyday life.

Group sessions (there are 8-12 people in a group) take place twice a month, while individual meetings with the doctor – once or twice a month. The course of treatment lasts from 2 to 5 years.

We use also short-term methods of therapy by means of creative self expression,

Our experience of working with this method continues for more than 30 years.

In about 80 percent of the cases a (high) rather good therapeutic effect has been achieved. That is a stable improvement of the condition with an almost permanent curative and creative, inspired and optimistic mood, in spite of possible decompensation (including situational) and endogenous aggravations. They have been overcome by creative self expression. There is a resolute rise of the curve of social life and a wish to help others as one has been helped by them.

So, what's the main mechanism of (our) psychotherapeutic creative influence? The creative work is the performance of any moral deed in accordance with one's spiritual individual make up. The creative work is a personality job. It elucidates and stresses the individuality, character of a person. The bases of mood disorders is very often a more or less expressed derangement and amorphous character of personal emotions. The person in the creative process, in his own way, feels his ego more. And if the more harmonious his spirit becomes – tension weakens. Then a person has the upswing of his spirit now (creative inspiration). The Psychotherapist tactfully in open groups introduces the patients to curative creative work doing this, in the first instance, by his own example, that is showing them how to write, draw or take slides. Each patient is to do these things in his own way, and this is extremely valuable as it explains and strengthens the personality. It helps the patient to recognise his natural uniqueness (within the definite character, clinical picture) – uniqueness in his own country, in the history of mankind, in Nature, on the Earth and in the Universe.

Therapy by means of creative self expression is contraindicated in cases of acute psychotic depression with suicidal tendencies, as well as during other acute mental disorders.

Short-term therapy by means of creative selfexpression may contain 1-2 group sessions. Certainly the more the better. For example, these are a few topics of such sessions:

1. "Pictures that correspond to my self and those that do not";
  2. "Plants that are in harmony with me, and those that are not";
  3. "Stamps that are consonant with my self, and those that are not";
  4. "Breughel and Platonov";
  5. "Autistic character";
  6. "Psychasthenic character";
  7. "Hysterical character";
  8. "Synthonic character";
  9. "Authoritarian character";
  10. "Mosaic character";
  11. "»Melancholia« of Dürer";
  12. "»Hamlet« of Shakespeare";
  13. "Pushkin and Lermontov – are two characters".
- etc.

I will tell you about one such session – "Pictures that correspond to my self and those that do not".

The patients, together with the psychotherapist watch upon a screen slides of pictures painted by artists different in character and express their accordance or dissonance with each picture. Harmony means not only that one simply "likes" or "dislikes" a certain picture. A picture is after one's heart (irrespective of its period), when one feels that one simply "likes" or "dislikes" a certain picture. A picture is after one's heart (irrespective of its period), when one feels that one would have painted the same and in the same way if one could. This is a mood close to one, to one's emotions and ap-

prehension of the world. There should be from 8 to 10 pictures. Each patient is given a chance to speak freely and marks on a sheet of paper which picture is near, close to him (left column) and which is not (right column). For instance, we show in succession paintings by such artists as Rembrandt, Raphael, Kiprensky, Tropinin, Matisse, Petrov-Vodkin, Botticelli, Giorgione. In most cases autistic patients (schizoids) reveal an inclination towards the philosophically-autistic painting of Matisse, Botticelli, Petrov-Vodkin. In most cases cycloids (synthonic patients) reveal an inclination towards gentle and full-blooded realistically inspired pictures by the remaining authors. Psychasthenics often show a liking both for some synthonic and some philosophically-autistic features and aspects of the paintings. In most cases schizophrenic patients reveal an inclination towards the surrealist pictures. Sometimes schizophrenic patients clearly reveal a consonance with surrealist or philosophic-autistic pictures and features, but are drawn to full-blooded heartfelt realistic ones and even naturalistic paintings, so as to feel more solid ground under their feet. In general, there may be many unexpected moments here, which are explained each in its own way (if it is possible to explain them at all). In the process of the short session the patients relax, as a rule after feeling their spiritual peculiarities. What is in harmony with me in a picture is to a certain extent myself. While something alien only stresses with its disharmony that I am different. Tactfully and on his own self as an example the psychotherapist helps the patients to discover their own personal attitude to each painting. The psychotherapist stresses how important it is even by such simple methods to feel more inspired by oneself and one's creative individuality. So, as to be able to mollify one's mental tension and simultaneously be useful to other people by one's diversely creative (moral in one's own way) contact with them.

The patients should be advised to distinguish harmony and disharmony in a similar way at home by watching slides of paintings, looking at pictures in books and albums.

The same refers to other works of art – poetry, fiction, music, sculpture, etc. Returning with a consonant understanding of art from a mood disorder to one's self, one should bear in mind that what is disconsonant does not mean less perfect. It may be brilliant in its expressive social usefulness penetrating morally into the hearts and minds of other people. However »this is not near, close to me, other moral concepts are nearer closer, but everyone has one's own way«.

Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy does not notice the Psychopathology, Clinical picture, Studies on characters. These are not so interesting for a Psychological psychotherapist. Existential-Humanistic Psychotherapy understands self-actualisation, personality growth, creative selfexpression, creative inspiration as emancipation, liberation from character, chronic clinical picture. It's wonderful. Therapy by means of creative self expression is a method of clinical psychotherapy for patients with a painful feeling of own inferiority. And clinical psychotherapy (in our, Russian meaning) – is a part of clinical psychiatry, clinical medicine. Therapy by means of creative selfexpression helps every patient to become clinician for himself and it helps his creative work and also helps him to search the sense of his living, Logos. Certainly, psychasthenic or schizophrenic happiness is not emancipation, liberation from a particular, chronic

clinical picture. But I think it's possible to be unique and happy without liberation from one's character, one's chronic disease, one's nature.

I think, I am a very hard patient for me myself. But I don't want to be emancipated from my pathological character, my pathological anxiety as well as in general from human nature. I want to feel, to experience my character, my anxiety, my age, my sex in healthy creative selfexpression.

#### Reference

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