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DEEP ACTS
Developing Emotional Education Pathways and
Art Centered Therapy Services against gender violence

Deliverable D3.5b

Photo-art therapy and Open Studio
Pilot Group Report

Final report

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1 – CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS ON PHOTO-ART THERAPY PILOT GROUPS

The photo-art therapy groups have been highly appreciated by the patients, despite the limitations resulting from the Coronavirus have forced the Art Therapist Carola Lorio to conduct them remotely via the web with the help in the presence of the colleague and collaborator Dr. Stefania Abbenante.

It was decided to start the first cycle of pilot groups with photo-art therapy because these normally take place, for the type of work envisaged, within a studio, postponing towards spring the conduct of the second cycle of meetings (the Open Studio with ecotherapy), given the need to work in the open air with the possibility of spacing moving in the garden.

For many patients, the collage technique has been new, also developed with the research, under the indications of the Photo-art therapist, of their own photographs searched weeks before at home or on social media.

Another innovative technique for many of the patients, within the Open Studio, was mindfulness, the muscular awakening of their body combined with ecotherapy and the rediscovery of the breath, of parts of oneself revised in the symbolic metaphor of a collected nature.

The work proposed in the laboratories invited the search for positive desires, desires for life, such as that of creating a family, in some circumstances some patients have not been able to express positive desires, but on the contrary have expressed deadly desires, linked in particular to the use of substances, a theme that on some occasions returns tormenting and frightening.

Following these contents, some absences by patients will follow due to psychic illnesses and somatizations.

Only one patient will definitively abandon the cycle of pilot groups for an impatience towards her own course of care and the desire to return home, which led her, after moving to a therapeutic apartment to abandon the path falling after a while in self-injurious dynamics.

In the second cycle of the pilot groups, on the other hand, a patient will be forced to suspend work without concluding it, despite a good predisposition, due to her psychotic disorder, expressed with auditory hallucinations, which have gradually made it impossible for her to participate.

2 – PILOT GROUPS OF PHOTO-ART THERAPY DEVELOPED WITH THE TECHNIQUE OF PROJECTIVE PHOTOS

The technique of projective photos, carried out in smart working, has had a good emotional impact on patients despite the lack of the paper image, as a concrete and personal object and chosen to hold in their hands.

The patients were equipped with a notebook, which served as a container to keep their projective work, consisting of writing and photography, collected.

Subsequently, the digital images chosen by the patients will be printed and pasted into the various pages that describe them.

The research that leads to the choice of photography that communicates something, takes place in screen share, a mode that allows patients the opportunity to see the sequence of prepared photos, dwelling on each individual photo for 5 seconds, repeating the same sequence to the eye for 3 times.

Unlike when the work is carried out in the presence where the paper photographs are placed on the table, we will take care of creating a visual photographic patch work on the computer screen with the chosen photos, in a way that is as orderly as possible, so that during the group work it is always visible to the eye.

The patients have almost always shown enthusiasm and high attention during this technique, interesting was the visual reading methods.

The work they have deepened basically revolves around two spheres, the familiar one and the more personal and intimate one.

The family is much thought out and reviewed in particular in the laboratory with the theme centered on "Christmas".

Starting from this stimulus, profound reflections were externalized on the meaning of this traditional feast, and on the difficulty and sadness in being forced to spend it in community, away from family members. If on the one hand sadness emerges, on the other there is the possibility of focusing with another look, more detached, rituals and past dynamics, which are currently lived with affection or annoyance.

Finally, desires emerge, not yet fully focused, to celebrate it in the future in a new, more serene way.

During the workshops a new way of living the group emerges, in some cases with appreciation, in others expressing the desire for solitude and the consequent need to isolate oneself by listening to music in headphones.

Often, next to nostalgia for the family, lack and a strong love for the pet appears; one patient in particular will develop new strategies to take care of her dog, thus overcoming the malaise and sadness for having abandoned him, finding peace with herself.

Compared to a more intimate sphere, the central theme was the body; thanks to some careful observations, the patients began to feel and enhance some of their parts such as lips, arms, hands and feet that were previously little considered.

The next step was to dwell on the concept of body care, through good food and self-care habits.

The desire at the base of this renewed care is to look at oneself and to be looked at with a gaze of respect and dignity.

Compared to the collage technique, the work with projective photos, which allows you to find unexpected mirroring responses, seems to have been more fun and more relaxing than collage, which forces a more intense and laborious work.

3 – PILOT GROUPS OF PHOTO-ART THERAPY DEVELOPED WITH THE TECHNIQUE OF COLLAGAND

With this technique, the patients collected photos that they integrated into a metaphorical storage space (a sheet of paper 70X100) always choosing the color that best suited their emotional state, with maximum freedom of exposure.

Through this technique it was possible to confirm some very important themes for patients, themes that have become recurrent and useful as keys to deepen both during the same groups, and in subsequent moments of the therapeutic course, during psychodynamic groups and individual psychotherapy.

The issues most addressed, also because of the stimuli given, were interpersonal relationships and affections, reviewed and developed starting from one's own personality in the relationship with the other, with one's parents, family and friends.

Later it was possible to work on the problem of affective addictions and couple relationships.

Some patients have had the ability to do a job or introspection of awareness, admitting their own distorted and inadequate behaviors of the past, when approaching life in a destructive way.

For some, therefore, the desire and strength to correct the mistakes made and try to live a present and a future with more consciousness, stability, tranquility and pleasure has emerged.

An important concept they addressed was that of the "Luogo sicuro" which helped patients and operators to understand if they felt sufficiently cared for and protected in the present.

The need arose for some to request new and wider spaces, not only physical and bodily but, in a metaphorical sense, interiors to explore, explore and rediscover parts of themselves.

Fear of substances and of abandoning oneself to feelings of inadequacy and discomfort have emerged.

Some patients due to the complexity of the work were not able to complete it after the first meeting, thus having the need to recover it and complete it the next time.

Most patients report having found, through this rather complex technique, pleasure and interest and confirmation of some internal issues not yet consolidated.

4 – CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS ON OPEN STUDIO PILOT GROUPS

The arrival of the hottest season, the circularity of the positive energies of the body and the bodies sought and expressed, the attention in the here and now to the breath, to the muscular awakening, the attention to collecting parts of itself, has made this group more dynamic and more attentive to its body, to nature and to the relationship with itself and with others.

After the third meeting, enjoying the sound of glockenspiel, the patients began to acquire a greater awareness of their body, their presence and their breath in the here and now with the practice of mindfulness.

Some of them will tell us that, thanks to this group, they have been able to practice during the week the breathing technique especially in the evening before falling asleep to feel present, alive and, in particular, to reduce their anxiety.

The word that summarizes the emotions of the body has led them to a greater listening to the needs of this.

There was a strong gratitude on the part of some patients in having proposed the work on the senses, thanks to those they have found particular sensations in the perception and discovery of themselves.

Ecotherapy has also been highly appreciated by offering new spaces for thought and reflection on the importance of one's presence in the here and now, within a natural and vital cycle suggesting pleasantness and beauty in finding and finding represented through natural metaphorical symbols parts of oneself (through the use of stones, pebbles, walnut shells, snails, twigs, leaves, flowers, blades of grass and feathers). All represented trauma, protection, self-defense shields, self-protection, linearity, regeneration, family, motherhood, childhood and childhood.

To their amazement, the patients were able to listen and marvel at this new expressive language.

ANNEXES

For privacy reasons, attachments are not available for public viewing.