

“Inspiration cards in psychotherapy with adolescents”

MSc. Nermina Vehabović-Rudež, reality psychotherapist-EAP

Mental Health Center Visoko

VIII Street B 2, Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina

e-mail: nermina.vehabovic.rudez@gmail

Summary

The difficulties that adolescents are facing, as well as the growing number of young people on treatment at the Mental Health Center are a constant incite to seeking for a new knowledge and skills, but also for the creative solutions to make the quality and efficiency of the treatment as good as possible.

Working with the young people through preventative educational workshops on self-confidence, communication, social skills, self-knowledge groups and individual psychotherapy, the author is witnessing the complexity of psychotherapeutic work with youngsters.

Adolescents are quick learners and are open for new experiences, but they are immature, authority rebels, suspicious and find difficult to give adult confidence. The very fact that adolescents question everything that comes from authority creates an obstacle to establishing and strengthening a therapist-client relationship. This resistance is particularly evident when they are “brought” by parents or “sent” by the school or the Social Work Center. The motivation of the young person to solve the problem he is came for, results in faster results.

Thinking about challenges in working with young people, especially in establishing and strengthening the trust, the author has developed the idea of creating and using Inspirational Cards.

Inspirational cards are especially made to fit the characteristics of the young person and the requirements in the work. Inspirational cards are imagined to be as the set of cards with sentences that may be an inspiration to an adolescent, something different from what they have been educated by socialization so far.

The Choice Theory beliefs are permeated into sentences through 32 inspirational cards. Taking care of the young peoples` interests on the back of cards are presented photographs of everyday life and interesting landscapes, which also can be used as projecting techniques.

The basic message of the inspirational cards for young people is that a young person needs to have inspiration (thought), then create (imagine) the created thought and then proceed to taking the action (realization) and that`s the road to achieve happiness. Staying on the phase of the inspiration or imagination, without trying to realize the positive ideas, desires and potentials will not be satisfied. Paying attention to the prevention of mental health of young people a base for good mental health at a later stage of life.

Key words: *adolescents, inspirational cards, choice theory, mental health.*

Sažetak

Mentalno zdravlje mladih je osnova za mentalno zdravlje odraslih. Mladi ljudi su zbog zahtjevnog razvojnog perioda u kojem se nalaze izloženi različitim poteškoćama, što se još pogoršava društveno-ekonomskom situacijom, porodičnim poteškoćama, problemima u školi i sa vršnjacima.

Preventivni rad je svakako jedan od najznačajnijih aktivnosti kada je riječ o mladim ljudima i njihovom mentalnom zdravlju.

Medjutim, ukoliko mladi dodju na psihoterapiju postoji niz poteškoća koje otežavaju psihoterapijski kontakt sa mladom osobom, a uglavnom su vezane za nezrelost, otpor prema autoritetu, sumnjičavost.

Kako bi psihoterapijski učinak bio kvalitetiji i efikasniji pred profesionalcima je stalno tražanje za metodama koje će to obezbijediti.

Inspiracijske kartice su upravo jedan takav pokušaj .Teorijska podloga inspiracijskih kartica je Teorija izbora prilagodjena mladim ljudima.

Ukoliko mladi na vrijeme nauče nova uvjerenja oni mogu živjeti zadovoljniji život i imati kvalitetniji odnos sa sobom i drugim ljudima.

Ključne riječi: *Mladi, mentalno zdravlje, psihoterapija, preventivni rad, inspiracijske kartice.*

Introduction

Adolescents are increasingly faced with psychological difficulties and behavioral disorders and therefore they are being referred to psychotherapeutic treatment by schools, social work centers, physicians or self-initiated parents.

When it comes to young people and their mental difficulties, we have to keep in mind that an adolescent period (which ranges from 12 to 24 years) (Bojanin, PopovićDeušić, 2012.) is highly demanding and that developing psychologists consider it one of the most demanding in human life. Changes are taking place in adolescence and it is important to respond to emerging tasks. These changes are biological (beginning of puberty, reproduction ability), cognitive (abstract and critical thinking) and social change (new social roles). The tasks the young person faces are:

- Answering to identity question (who am I?)
- Getting independence in your own and other's eyes
- Establishing close friendships with mutual respect
- Becoming capable of expressing sexual feelings and enjoying sexual contact with others
- Achieving the status of a successful and capable member of society ((Bojanin, PopovićDeušić, 2012.)

In addition to these developmental tasks and challenges, adolescents are exposed to a complex socio-economic situation, disrupted family, school relationships, and peers.

Abovementioned in many cases is the cause of drug and alcohol abuse, gambling and internet addiction, depression, anxiety, eating disorders or intentional self-injury, which causes young people to come to the psychiatrist treatments at the Mental Health Center in Visoko. In the first half of 2018 there were 43 young people on treatment.

Purpose

The purpose of this work is to present the Inspirational Cards and their application in psychotherapeutic work with adolescents through case studies.

Inspirational Cards

All of the difficulties faced by adolescents, as well as the growing number of young people on treatment at the Mental Health Center in Visoko are the constant incite to seeking for a new knowledge and skills, but also for the creative solutions to make the quality and efficiency of the treatment as good as possible.

Working with the young people through preventative educational workshops on self-confidence, communication, social skills, self-knowledge groups and individual psychotherapy, the author is witnessing the complexity of psychotherapeutic work with young-

sters. Adolescents are quick learners and are open for new experiences, but they are immature, authority rebels, suspicious and find difficult to give adult confidence. The very fact that adolescents question everything that comes from authority creates an obstacle to establishing and strengthening a therapist-client relationship. This resistance is particularly evident when they are “brought” by parents or “sent” by the school or the Social Work Center. The motivation of the young person to solve the problem he is came for, results in getting faster results.

Psychotherapeutic work with young people also requires getting constant informations about technological progress, as well as the knowing the trends followed by young people, and informations on the actual language they use- the actual sleng.

Thinking about challenges in working with young people, especially in establishing and strengthening the trust, the author has developed the idea of creating and using Inspirational Cards.

Inspirational cards are especially made to fit the characteristics of the young person and the requirements in the work. Inspirational cards are imagined to be as the set of cards with sentences that may be an inspiration to an adolescent, something different from what they have been educated so far by socialization.

The theoretical framework from which the sentences are derived is William Glasser’s Theory of Choice (Glasser 2000), and the understanding of human behavior based on cybernetics of the second order (Lojk 2002). The human organism is a closed system with purposeful functioning that is motivated from inside. The organism is equal to behavior that is interpreted as the indivisible ensamble of action, thought, feeling and physiological processes. This is possible thanks to the motives that trigger the behavior, the ability to track and compare the informations from the environment to motives and the ability to harmonize which is the most significant characteristic of creativity. These characteristics of the system are explained to the needs of psychotherapy in detail through the constructs of psychic needs, the world of quality and overall behavior. Dr. William Glasser points out that the beliefs of external psychology are the one that endanger the mental health of people, or rather, endanger important relationships.

He opposes these beliefs with the beliefs of the Theory of Choice, which, if adopted, enable to live a more satisfying life. Traditional beliefs (Glasser, 2000):

1. My behavior is a response to the circumstances.
2. My behavior is the answer to your behavior and vice versa.
3. My role and task is to do everything I can to make you behave the way I think you should.

Contrary to these traditional beliefs that affect the good quality of important people relationships, there are beliefs of the Theory of Choice that help to promote relationships:

1. My behavior is my choice in certain circumstances.
2. My behavior is my choice, your behavior is your choice. Your behavior is just information for me, what I will do with it, is my choice.
3. My responsibility as a parent, teacher, boss is to create the conditions to realize your potentials. What will you do in these conditions is your choice.

Precisely the beliefs of the Choice Theory are pervaded into sentences that are offered through 32 inspirational cards. Taking care of the young peoples` interests there are photographs of everyday life and interesting landscapes on the back of the cards, which also can be used as projecting techniques.

The basic message of the inspirational cards for young people is that a young person needs to have inspiration (thought), then create (imagine) the created thought and then proceed to taking the action (realization) and that`s the road to achieve happiness. Staying on the phase of the inspiration or imagination, without trying to realize the positive ideas, will not satisfy existing desires and potentials.

Case report:

A 13-year-old girl, attends the seventh grade of elementary school (by local school system), achieving good success. She lives with her parents as a middle child with two brothers. Father is employed, and mother is a housewife.

She came to Mental Health Center according to the instructions of the Center for Social Work and Police, after the parents report of being the victim of sexual abuse by pedophiles.

At the first meeting, involuntarily and shyly enters the clinic. She answers the questions briefly but with a smile, occasionally makes the eye contact, she looks "absent." She came regularly to the next sessions, but she was still cautious and it was difficult to establish deeper verbal contact. The anger and hostility of parents was noticeable. Due to the need for continuous psychological support and stigmatization exposure, she is placed in a Safe house for a six-month period.

After staying in the Safe house, psychotherapeutic treatment was continued at the Mental Health Center. Sessions were held once a week lasting 45 minutes. The client was still silent, the conversations were difficult, and she was still angry with her parents and wanted to leave home.

After several sessions, the Inspiration Cards were offered to her so she could randomly extract one. After selecting the card, a sincere smile appeared on her face and elated exclamation "That's right!".

She pulled out a card saying, "I'm managing my life no matter what kind of circumstances surround me." That way she began talking about life choices and responsibilities, and

what would she continue to do in life. It was the moment when she realized she did not come to psychotherapy to “be changed.”

From that moment on, the conversation and contact was more open. She began to strengthen her trust towards the therapist. In further psychotherapy work Inspirational cards were used frequently to determine the emotional state at the beginning or at the end of the session or for a discussion of the sentences written on the Inspirational cards.

The psychotherapeutic treatment lasted for a year, after which she was coming to sessions every 15-20 days for the necessary psychotherapeutic support while the trial process took place in the court.

Conclusion

Inspirational cards offer an opportunity for the adolescents to think in a different way about themselves and the life they live. Using these cards they have the ability to think about, discuss and question about themselves and their relationships with other people. The cards help to reduce the initial resistance in psychotherapy and strengthen the relationship between the adolescent and the therapist. Apart from using the cards in therapeutic individual and group work, adults can also use them daily in contact with the youth.

Teachers and professors can use the Inspirational Cards as a good introduction to the beginning of the class to establish better relationships in the classroom, giving young people the opportunity to talk about their experience of the written text, thus thus gaining a new look at themselves and relationships with others.

Inspirational Cards can also be used through the teaching process as a prevention of peer violence.

Cards can be used by parents to entertain and build quality relationships with their children.

By learning new beliefs, adolescents can learn to live a more contented way of life.

Paying attention to the prevention of mental health of young people a base for good mental health at a later stage of life.

References

1. EIRT (2018) *Teorija izbora*. Evropski Institut za Realitetnu terapiju, <https://www.eirt.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Leon-Lojk-Pracenje-razvoja-Glasserovih-ideja-final.pdf>, Pristupljeno, 23.Mart 2018.
2. Bojanin S., Popović Deušić S., (2012). *Psihijatrija razvojnog doba*, Beograd.
3. Glasser W.,(2000); *Realitetna terapija u primjeni*, Zagreb, Alinea.
4. Glasser W., (2000). *Teorija izbora*, Zagreb, Alinea.
5. Lojk L., (2002). *Znanstvena utemeljenost realitetne terapije*, Zagreb,Alinea.