

Guidelines for PPT Trainers

Approved by the Board of Directors of the World Association for Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy (WAPP), as of January 2021

Educational group self-experience/discovery in PPT training¹

These guidelines are specially for Master Trainers (MT) in Positive Psychotherapy, who conduct basic and master courses. These guidelines deal with the self-experience part of trainings, according to WAPP standards. According to the requirements of WAPP (based on the German Psychotherapists Law from 1998), there are three topics which play a central role in self-experience:

- 1. Reflection and modification of personal prerequisites for therapeutic experience and action, including biographical aspects.*
- 2. Recognizing meaningful aspects of experiencing and acting in the context of a therapeutic relationship.*
- 3. To grasp the significant aspects of experiencing and acting in the context of personal development during the course of training.*

Educational self-discovery which takes place within the framework of trainings in PPT differs fundamentally from personal psychotherapy and other forms of self-experience that are therapeutic or purely voluntary in nature.

What is educational self-experience?

Primarily, educational self-experience should assist students (candidates, residents, trainees) in developing a psychodynamic psychotherapeutic identity. The self-reflection of the student should be strengthened and developed. They should encounter their own central inner conflict and own personality structure. They should experience at themselves how psychotherapy works, and how challenging it can be. The personal experience of the unconscious is the central aspect of psychodynamic SE.

Even educational self-discovery deals with personal issues, it is not personal therapy. The student is not a patient, but a future colleague and a future psychotherapist. If during the educational self-discovery the student and/or his trainer find out that there are many personal unsolved issues, then the student should go in a personal therapy. This further means, that a personal therapy cannot be counted as an educational self-experience.

How is educational self-discovery organized regarding its contents?

Self-discovery should enable students to work with psychotherapeutic patients. WAPP recommends a semi-structured approach when working on the following topics in order to prevent "blind spots", taboo topics or the unconscious avoidance of certain areas. These are all topics that might come up during a psychotherapeutic process, and the student should have dealt with them in advance. Please do not look at the following points as some sort of checklist or catalogue, but as an orientation:

¹ Abbreviations used in this text: PPT: Positive Psychotherapy (after N. Peseschkian); SE: self-experience/self-discovery; BC: basic course; MC: master course; BT: basic trainer; MT: master trainer

- **Relationships** (relationship ability, awareness about attachments – differentiation – detachment abilities, experience dealing with others, contacts, friendships, partnership, dealing with authorities, dealing with boundaries, differentiation between own needs and others needs etc.)
- **Biography** (development in the family, own family and sibling constellation, deficits / losses / conflicts, model of relationship in the family etc.)
- **Body** (body image, impression on others, clothing/appearance, physicality, sexuality, dealing with illness etc.)
- **Life goals/sense of life** (image of man, existential questions, value system, religion, dying and death, life planning with reference to these backgrounds, etc.)
- **Achievement/career** (dealing with success/failure, dealing with money, importance of recognition, conscious and unconscious motivation for the profession they have, etc.)
- **Sharpening of self-reflection** with special consideration of the self-perception and perception of others ("What do I trigger in my counterpart? How others perceive me when I met them first time? Which is my personality structure? How it influences my work with patients?")
- **Group dynamics** (discrepancy between self-perception and perception of others, taking over of perspectives, dealing with criticism and conflicts, empathy, dealing with hierarchies, sense of justice, etc.)
- **As well as other topics** (assuming responsibility for the therapeutic process and the own (therapeutic) acting, recognizing blind spots in one's own biography, recognizing and clarifying own conflict areas, developing a helpful therapeutic attitude, cultural identity etc.)

Development goals

Even the development of every student is unique - as it is also with patients - and every self-experience trainer has a different course of action, **at the end** of the educational self-experience, the following characteristics of a therapist's personality should have developed:

- Experiencing psychotherapeutic interventions, methods, and techniques by working on their own conflictual issues.
- The examination of one's own image of man, with own concepts and relationship patterns including biographical aspects.
- Conscious perception and reflection of one's own affects on relevant topics (such as aggression, anger, power, sexuality, money, death, illnesses) as they occur later in therapy.
- Work on the introspective ability as well as one's own "blind spots" (for example, beliefs, moments of transference, participation, effect of physical experience).
- The enduring of emotionally charged content (containment), the development of the abilities to clarify the therapeutic fit and the perception of associative patterns in the therapeutic encounter.
- The development of emotional communication skills, as appropriate to the therapeutic task - also for confrontation in established therapeutic relationships.
- Strengthening the ability to provide people with connectedness and stabilizing support, clarification and understanding over a longer period, and finally a constructive detachment in the therapeutic relationship (bonding experience).
- Recognizing and practicing strategies for difficult therapeutic situations (such as dealing with conflicts, unpredictable situations, existential issues, crises, injustices).
- The reflection of personal requirements for therapeutic work.
- The work on unconscious motives for the choice of profession and method.

- Establishing an identity as a psychotherapist, considering own resources and limits (mental hygiene).
- Understanding and respect for the uniqueness of each human being with special regard to cultural similarities and differences (cultural sensitivity).
- Awareness of ethical behavior as a member of a healing profession

How to do self-discovery as a trainer?

Like a schoolteacher who has the same curriculum as all other teachers, the personality of the trainer and the group members, will influence the self-discovery process to a great extent. Here are some practical thoughts:

- For each session remember the **3 stages of interaction** and follow them (attachment, differentiation, detachment). Organize specific exercises for each stage, exercises which are in connection with the topic you want to approach.
- In the book “Positive Family Therapy” are questions to each of the four areas of the balance model and to the four areas of emotionality (model dimensions). Sometimes one can give some of the questions to small groups and later the reflections will be discussed in the large group.
- During the **differentiation stage**, the debriefing method is very important. Do an exercise, ask questions for self-reflection or reflection in small groups, share them in the large group, establish with the group 1-2 take-aways.
- **Self-reflection exercises** - for example: one of the most easy and awakening exercise for SE is to find a symbol/object about oneself and to talk about this object as it is myself (a pencil – I am long, people can use me, I have a lot to share...). After this exercise, ask the participants how they identified with the object, what was not about them, what they discover about themselves, how they could use this exercise for their patients/clients and why.
- **Group reflection exercise** – for example: you can put into scene one oriental story from Nossrat Peseschkian’s books. Each participant chooses his or her own role and then the group plays the story. In the end, you can ask them, in the large group: why did they choose the role, how it was to play it, what have they done differently than the story said? People could give their feedback also to others about their roles, about how they see the relation between the role and the person in real life etc. This could be a discussion in the large group.
- At the same time, you as the trainer need to have a **clear structure** in your mind about what you see and hear in the exercise (to translate what you see and hear into a structure – is about relationship pattern, about conflicts dynamic, about personality structure)
- **Keep a track for each participant** (an excel file or written) and write what you saw during the seminars, for each participant. This will help you to monitor participants development, peculiarities, strong points, and will help you to give a final feedback and to decide about the next step for each of them.