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ON PSYCHOPROPHYLAXIS OF HARD DRINKING AND ALCOHOLISM BY MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION IN "RISK GROUPS"

alcoholism psychotherapy

Therapy by means of creative self-expression (with an understanding of one's social usefulness and the development of a stable optimistic disposition on this basis) is a practical method of Professor V. Ye. Rozhnov's emotional and stress psychotherapy worked out by the author and addressed to the spiritual in man in order to incite in the personality a vital and curative need for self-improvement (V. Ye. Rozhnov, 1985). The given practical method is particularly effective in the treatment of psychopathias, slowly progredient schizophrenia and alcoholic patients with defensive disorders. (M. Ye. Burno, 1985, 1986). As the experience of over 16 years has proved, this method has been successfully used as a psychoprophylactic measure for preventing hard drinking and alcoholism, as actually all our groups of defensive-psychopathologic and defensive-schizophrenic patients can be quite well called "risk groups". Before the beginning of treatment about 19 per cent of the patients (61 people including 27 women, mostly asthenic schizoid psychopaths and patients suffering from slowly progredient schizophrenia) got drunk without any symptoms of chronic alcoholism. In the course of treatment hard drinking stopped, while 9 people gave up drinking altogether.

The essence of therapy (psychoprophylaxis) by means of creative self-expression lies in the fact that during individual meetings with the doctor, group sessions in an atmosphere of a "psychotherapeutic drawing-room" (with tea, slides, candlelight and soft music) as well as at home, the patients learn to express themselves creatively each according to his peculiar features, i.e. learn to perform any moral task consciously, in his own way and in accordance with his spiritual individuality. In this process man becomes more of himself, more creative and, consequently, a more inspired person even in his profession. The group sessions in a cozy atmosphere also include an explanatory and educational study of the properties of one's nature, of radically-minded people with a striving to understand one's own and other people's characters as far as possible. The patients, united by goodwill towards one another, by looking at slides, listening to music, stories and poetry, investigate the expression of different characters in all kinds of creative work. The patients

are filled with that kind of spiritual culture of mankind which corresponds to their characters. They try to make themselves useful to other people in a profound way by applying "the strength of their weakness". They are also filled with a conscious feeling of their socially useful uniqueness and become considerably more protected than before from the disorders of their moods including the predisposition to hard drinking. Thus one can see that all this is not merely entertainment, hobbies or clubs according to one's interests. This is a curative, preventative, conscious construction of one's spiritual "fortress", a revelation of one's personality on the basis of stable individual features. Through harmony with other people capable of such harmony, with certain works of fiction, art and science, though harmony with certain trees, grasses and animals, a person gets to know himself better, and, this is the main thing, sees his socially useful life-path more clearly. This is an attempt not only to become happy but to become happy in one's own way.

The different methods 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 of literature and art;
2. by means of a creative contact with nature;
3. by means of 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.

The doctor and his assistants (a psychologist and a nurse) tactfully in open groups introduce the patients to curative creative work doing this, in the first instance, by their own example, i.e. 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, helps it to cognize its uniqueness in its own country, in the history of mankind, in Nature, on the Earth and in the Universe.

Group session (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. In about 80 per cent of the cases (312 non-alcoholic patients altogether) a high therapeutic effect has been achieved, i.e. a stable improvement of the condition with an almost permanent curative and creative, inspired and optimistic mood, this in spite of possible decompensations (including situational) and endogenic aggravations which have been overcome with a resolute rise of the curve of social life and a wish to help others as one has been helped by them. During this stable enthusiasm there has been no need to excite, whip oneself up with strong dring — fear was even observed of muddling and weakening the acquired inspiration by a hang-over.

The practical side of the business is however rather difficult at times. Thus patient S., middle-aged (an endogenic-defensive case with depersonalization disorders in the foreground)* tried in his time to alleviate his painful condition by drinking. Now he is a teetotaller. Experiencing an inner resistance to creative therapy, he did not start photographing or doing any other creative work for 1.5 years, though I asked him about it every meeting reminding him jokingly that quite a good camera cost only 15 roubles. He even admitted later that he started taking slides only to avoid the reproachful look of the doctor. He brought his

* The case has been described in detail, but without this addition (M. Ye. Burno, 1981).

first black-and-white slides to the group "just for the sake of reporting", as he said, convinced that they were no good. When he heard in the course of their discussion at a session of the group that many of those present liked them, he did not believe in the sincerity of the praise. He thought that they said it not to disappoint him. His own slides seemed dull to him. However when he started comparing them at home with those he had bought ("Yasnaya Polyana") he saw that there was something "peculiar" and "his own" in them. He suddenly understood that he and his fellow-patients had seen his slides in a different light, and, what is most important, he arrived at the conclusion that irrespective of the technique and their artistic value they were his **personal** slides, even if they were poorly done. No one else could make the same pictures — the slides revealed his individuality. Now when looking through his slides S. can actually always "pull himself out" of a painful condition, for at least one slide is sure to touch him, and then he starts feeling better and more optimistic. This manifestation of **self** produces a very positive effect on him, bringing out his good sides. And still writing produced the strongest curative effect. No matter how gloomy he might feel, the quickest and safest way of getting relief is to lie down upon the sofa, remember what happened the day before and that day and write it down. In the past he used to keep diaries and sometimes write short stories, throwing them away with annoyance not knowing at the time that their chief value was personal. Only with time he came to feel clearly how strongly his depersonalization tension relaxed by returning to himself, to his ego in slides, short stories and notes. He saw for himself that the depersonalization "loss of self" was only transitory, as even in this condition he could make his own typical pictures.

O PSYCHOPROFILAKTYCE PIJAŃSTWA I ALKOHOLIZMU W „GRUPACH RYZYKA” PRZY POMOCY SELFEKSPRESJI

STRESZCZENIE

Twórcza selfekspresja, metoda psychoterapii opisana przez W. E. Rożnowa może być zastosowana w indywidualnej i grupowej pracy z osobami zagrożonymi alkoholizmem. W indywidualnym kontakcie psychoterapeutycznym, w grupie terapeutycznej i odpowiednim środowisku mogą być stworzone warunki, w których pacjent świadomie podejmuje zadanie twórczego wyrażenia swoich duchowych możliwości. Wysiłek ten postrzegany jest jako zadanie moralne, a jego realizacja przyczynia się do uzdrawiającej poprawy poczucia własnej wartości. Opis metody zilustrowany jest przedstawieniem przypadku.