Person-Centred Sociotherapy

An Idea in Process
Δανάη Μαρινάκη
Danae Marinakis
What is it?

- Ways of applying person-centred attitudes, principles and practices to:
  - Social situations
  - Groups
  - Society as a whole
Why?

• If Mental and Emotional Distress has environmental and social origins (see Sanders, 2006: 33) then:

• It makes sense to take social action

Heart Transplants or Clean Water?

• Heart surgeons are glamorous and held in awe

• **But**

• The guys who gave us clean water and working sewers saved more lives
• Clean Water
• School Dinners
• Immunisation Programmes

Have all done more for the health of any nation than heart transplants
What Should Come First Therapy or Social Well-Being?

• In counselling and psychotherapy in general and the person-centred approach in particular, has the tail been wagging the dog for too long?

• Perhaps at least some of us could/should think about how to prevent mental and emotional distress in the first place
So

- There is a place for preventative strategies with respect to mental and emotional health.
- This presentation is a chance to tell you something about our ideas
- **And**
- **A chance to hear yours**
My Journey

• Person-Centred Person or Client-Centred Therapist?
• Applying person-centred principles to work as an educator and researcher
• Dissatisfied – rewarding but not enough?
• Are groups where it is at?
• If all approaches to therapy are equally effective, why do I choose to be person-centred?
A bit of theory

- Schmid (2003: 10) emphasises the ‘fundamental We’ as a basic characteristic of the person centred approach.
- Each of us only exists as part of a ‘We’
- **And (2003: 111)**
  - ‘we are unavoidably part of the world’

A bit more theory

• ‘the We implies a connectedness, an inter-relatedness that goes beyond the organism.’
• ‘It is possible to conceive of the We as a meta-organism to which we all belong’
• ‘To harm the ‘We’ is to harm the me’
• ‘We is more than an immediate community, more than humanity, more than all living things. It is our planet in its totality’

Even more theory!

Shlien (2003: 218) says
‘The main human problem is: how to lead an honorable life.’

I say (2006: 13):
‘To adopt a person-centred way of being in the world implies a desire to lead an ethical and honourable life, but also a charitable life’

Are You Bored with Theory Yet?

- ‘Individual’ is not a synonym for ‘person’. The latter is a relational concept.
- We need others and are needed by them.
- Encounter and connectedness are at the heart of a satisfying existence.
- It is in our interest to be loving, charitable, helpful because if we collectively are not then existence is threatened.
- Social human beings are more likely to survive than unsocial human beings.
There is such a thing as SOCIETY
However

• Distressed societies beget distressed people
• Distressed people act in distressing ways
• People disconnected from a sense of the Universal
  We may act as individuals rather than persons
• Such behaviour results in yet further social distress
  and yet more emotional distress for individuals
Towards a Resolution

• *Sociotherapy is about ‘putting right’ the social distress that lies behind emotional and mental distress*

• *It’s about encountering others and the environment in a way that emphasises:*
  - **Empathy**
  - **Unconditional Positive Regard**
  - **Congruence**
How do you do that then?

• This Is Your Bit!