



Abstract Nr: 113
Internet ID: 313

Type of Presentation: Symposium

'Being-With' at Soteria House - The Healing Power of Human Connection

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Learning Goal:

"Being-With", a main component of the Soteria House care, is far more than an empty slogan. It is an interpersonal expertise required in complex situations where the "I" meet the "Other".

Abstract Text:

The original model of Soteria was founded by L.R. Mosher who was influenced by the concepts of existential-interpersonal psychotherapy. As such, a central component of Soteria care is the establishment of relations through the empathic presence of "Being-With". Originally, "Being-With" was described as an attentive way of getting oneself "into the other person's shoes" so that a shared meaning of the psychotic experience can be established via a relationship. In a qualitative study I conducted on the experiences of the staff working in Soteria House in Israel, I discovered that the concept of "Being-With" arises different types of questions and complexities under different circumstances. It also looks different in the men's house and in the women's house, bringing in a dimension of gender to the experience of "Being-With".

I discovered three main categories of "Being-With". The first category is "Being-With" in areas between dream and reality. This category refers to staffs' experience when joining tenant's subjective reality and coping with questions of how to bring in the "agreed upon reality" into the dialogue. The second category is "Being-With" in areas of danger. This category portrays itself differently based on gender. While at the men's house the staff is mainly required to "Be-With" tenants' outward expressions of aggression, in the women's house the staff is mainly required to "Be-With" tenants' inward expressions of aggression such as self-harm and suicidality. The third category is "Being-With" in areas of trauma. This category came almost exclusively from the staff working in the women's house and mainly in the context of sexual trauma. It aroused interesting questions about interpersonal and organizational boundaries in a model that aspires to flatten hierarchy.

In short, "Being-With" is far more than an empty slogan. It is an interpersonal expertise required in complex situations where the "I" meet the "Other".

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**