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**New ways of sheltered living, the best of both worlds (by Jan van Blarikom)**

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**Learning Goal:**

The participant gets to know new, optimal forms of sheltered living from the perspective of the client, the family and the professional.

**Abstract Text:**

Sheltered living takes a historic position between a long-term stay in a psychiatric hospital and complete independent living. We have known forms of sheltered living since the fifties of the twentieth century. In many Western countries the demand for safe, sheltered living has become more urgent, since the psychiatric hospital is no longer a refuge for even the most vulnerable people. Zeeuwse Gronden, a Dutch mental welfare institution of which the policy is determined by clients, family and professionals collectively, has developed a unique concept concerning sheltered living. Safety, small scale and social interaction in the heart of society constitute the core values that prevent loneliness and alienation. After all, elaborate studies of the WHO have taught us that autonomy alone does not guarantee the recovery of a person with a severe mental disorder. Social interaction within a coherent, social system is an important condition.

The new form of sheltered living has developed so rapidly in the Province of Zeeland in the Netherlands, that by now small scale living facilities are situated all over the province. It is an answer to the question how people with a severe mental disorder can lead an independent life, as much as possible, within a safe, social environment.

In this story, told from the perspective of the client, the family and the professional, autonomy (the Western value) meets the mutual solidarity and the coherent family systems of non-Western cultures: the best of both worlds.

**ON THE HEALING POWER  
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**