



Memories and reflections of a Three plus Two year systemic psychotherapy education program and clinical supervision.

Family Therapy Unit

Attica's Psychiatric Hospital*

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Book-presentation of: "Family Therapy Unit, A.P.H., Memories & Reflections"



Who am I really....

I feel deeply honored being invited to write here today about the book "Memories and Reflections - Stories of Systemic Psychotherapy at the Family Therapy Unit of Psychiatric Hospital of Attica". I feel emotionally moved by this book, since in a way it includes a part of my own history, my own memories and reflections from the 5 years' experience that I acquired as a trainee in this Unit.

I want to share with you the first feelings I had, when I read the invitation for today's book presentation: I felt happy and honored, but at the same time I felt anxious and a strong sense of responsibility.



How will I be capable of conveying the importance of the work being held in the Family Therapy Unit and how will I be able to approach the level that this is depicted in this book that we are here today for?

I gave it a lot of thought. I started reading and studying oversystemic thought texts, so that my intervention today would be scientifically sound. I almost went into stress mode.

Until I remembered the words that some of our teachers from the Unit used to say; it comes to a point that the most important thing to do in psychotherapy is to leave the books aside and just experience with the other the greatness of sharing.

So here I am today trying to share with you my own experience as a trainee and a member of the supervision team at the Family Therapy Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica.

I started attending the Unit's training program in October 2013; I had to apply twice to get into the program.

I still remember the first day we met with the rest of the team in the large hall of the first floor. We were twenty plus one. Psychiatrists, Child Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Sociologists, Nurses.

Even today, after over five years, I can still recall very vividly and in a lot of detail the moment of our first meeting.

So on that first day, Mrs. Haralabaki and Mr. Magiples asked us to make groups of 4-5 people. Once the groups were formed, we were asked to come up with a text to introduce our group to the plenary. My group consisted of Elli, Panagiotis, Evangelia, Sophia and myself. After we introduced ourselves by saying what we had been studying, working on, etc., we started to discuss the reasons why we had applied to participate in the Unit's training program and what we expected from it. In the end, we had to come up with a joint text that we would present to the plenary. We did not end up in a text. Instead, we ended up with some verses from the song "Ode to George Karaiskakis", which is included in the album "The Garden of the Insane" by Dionysis Savvopoulos.

“Who am I really and where do I go
With a million pictures in my head
Spotlights are blinding me and on I go
And I kneel down and kiss your blood”

After over five years, today, here, in my effort to convey the experience of my participation in the Unit's training program, I can still say, that these first lyrics,



chosen back then in an effort to present ourselves, our desires and our aspirations for the training program that was just about to start, remain importantly relevant to me.

During the first three years of the training, we tried to approach both by theory and by experience the systemic way of thinking and understanding; trainer's lectures, experiential exercises, case monitoring, text analysis and presentation, attending family therapy sessions behind a one-way mirror, searching our genealogy tree, and more.

For the last 3 plus 2 years, every Thursday evening, we used to meet at Ellanikou 3 in the neighborhood of Pagrati. On this road that bears the name of Mytilene Historian of Antiquity, we were getting familiar with a new way of listening, understanding, supporting and intervening with the history of the families we had been assigned to take care of.

If I had to put the experience of these five years into one or two words, I would primarily chose the words Meeting Together.

Meeting with an entire group of co-learners and trainers.

Meeting with Systemic Thinking.

Meeting queries and demons of our personal story.

Meeting with an effort to understand living systems.

Meeting eventually with CO-EXISTING (an effort to translate in English the ancient Greek word "sun- histamai" which is the etymological basis of the word "system")

During these 3 plus 2 years, members of our group experienced new loves, marriages, pregnancies, births, deaths, separations and new professional challenges. In other words, in these five years we experienced the SHARING and the PROCESS of the team. And I am really grateful for all of this.

After the first three years of the educational part of the program passed, a supervision team was formed; a new but not so new team, since supervision teams were also attended by trainees from upper levels.

So that was the beginning of new meetings.

There, in this safe space and time, we shared the experiences, the anxiety, the agony, the clinical queries, and the burden of responsibility, both for the people that we had been assigned to take care of and our professional background, too.

There, the theory, the knowledge and the experience of the previous three years started to become clinical practice; to come into shape; we started to acquire our shape as therapists as well. Personally, my experience from the supervision team had a catalytic effect on me; it basically gave me shape as a therapist.



I can still remember our anxiety when we were about to share our experience on case management, along with our personal queries on how to carry on our intervention. But I also remember the feeling of relief afterwards, when leaving the team, we had taken with us the advice and new directions.

The role of the people in the group was catalytic on how much they were present and able to hold us together and try to give meaning to what we could no longer give.

The approach of our supervisor, Mr. Kotsidas, throughout the whole process of supervision was distinct, unpretentious, inspired and liberated from theoretical norms.

In closing, it might be worth mentioning how much I can now realise that all this experience as a trainee and member of the Unit's supervision team affects and concerns me not only as a social worker and therapist, but also as a person receiving therapy myself. Despite having already been on individual therapy for several years before starting the program, my experience over the past five years has enabled me to talk, listen to what I say and finally live, through this Co-Existing approach.

On 24/11/2017, a conference with the topic: "Family Therapy Unit Psychiatric Hospital of Attica, 20 plus 3 Years: What Remains, What Has Changed" was held in the multi-purpose room of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica. The present book, for the presentation of which we meet here today, was born from the material gathered from this workshop. Since then, 20 plus 3 years turned into 20 plus 4, and now we are at 20 plus 5. Come what may, one thing is certain, PLUS (CO- EXISTING) will always matter.

Thank you very much.

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