

THERAPY CONCEPT

THERAPIESALON IM WALD

„Thoughts run free and there is actually no big or significant decision that I have made in my life, which I haven't arrived at on the Rax. And, so I hike across the Platea as an analogy to the vita contemplativa, the meditative life, of introspection and then the vita active begins, the active life, of taking hold, of tackling – literally, taking a hold of the rock.”

Victor Frankl

PSYCHIATRIC AND PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS

The program at the therapy center Therapiesalon im Wald addresses individuals suffering from severe mental health problems and psychosomatic disorders. Although the use of these terms has increased, they remain unclear in their definition for many. This is very understandable, especially since psychosomatic disorders present through a variety of symptoms. Many individuals have difficulty understanding the connections between physical symptoms and possible psychological causes. However, the perception of psychological problems is changing, especially since the term Burn Out Syndrome has become frequently used. An increased understanding about the psychological impact of overload and the necessity for support and support systems is noticeable.

Due to increased demand, the number of facilities for the treatment of psychosomatic disorders has grown in recent years. However, treatment of this problem continues to focus too strongly and exclusively on the individual's symptoms. Psychosomatic pathology does not solely identify medical reasons for symptoms; it rather views the disorder as the result of combined emotional and physical conflict. Most often there is no awareness about this conflict, it remains suppressed or is devalued. As a result, some patients may tend to avoid physicians who are able to diagnose psychological causes.

Additional stressors, also exacerbated by our digital age, develop through increased vocational and social demands on the individual, causing a discrepancy between expected performance and realistic means and capabilities to shape outcomes and meet demands.

Problems of attachment usually play a key role in the consideration of psychosomatic issues. Relationship problems can be the cause; where these problems are not the source of the conflict, they most definitely are an outcome. Unhealthy lifestyle in general, decreased physical movement or exercise, unhealthy nutrition, smoking, and self medication amplify the symptoms of the disorder.

The disorder can manifest in a variety of psychological and medical symptoms or contribute to medical conditions. As a result some of the typical disorders are:

- Stressor related disorders
- Anxiety disorders and panic attacks
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Substance related and unrelated disorders and addictive disorders
- Somatic symptom and related disorders
- Depression and depressive related disorders
- Attachment and relationship problems

THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

Therapiesalon im Wald proposes an extension of the therapeutic setting into the untouched natural surroundings of the Viennese Alps. Treatment occurs in a professional and yet comfortable hotel setting. Depending on the degree of impairment and distress caused by the presenting problem and on the duration of symptoms, Therapiesalon offers two basic structures of treatment which are aligned with the goals of the individual patient:

LONG TERM TREATMENT PROGRAM: duration – min. 3 months or more

SHORT TERM TREATMENT PROGRAM: duration - min. 10 days or more

The **LONG TERM TREATMENT** model is based on the concept of therapeutic community for capacity building. With professional guidance, the therapy client can self responsibly take charge of his/her process towards increased health and higher levels of functioning. Social dynamics within the group constitute the focal point and are significant input for therapeutic intervention. Special focus is placed on attachment and relationship issues that underlie the presenting symptoms. The building of social skills and “soft skills” are taught, trained, practiced and reviewed. In terms of a systemic approach, topics and structures concerning the client’s family and social network will be integrated into the ongoing therapeutic process.

Who will benefit:

Individuals suffering from long standing or recurring issues, chronic health problems or failed attempts at therapy, and individuals experiencing difficulties in achieving or maintaining adequate levels of vocational functioning will benefit from this approach.

Conventional institutions oftentimes term these individuals “revolving door patients”, referring to multiple attempts at therapy without sustainable outcomes. However, the prognosis for long term therapeutic intervention is positive and many individuals suffering from these disorders respond very well to treatment.

As an example, recurring episodes of depression, addiction, post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, compulsive disorders, and severe symptoms related to disorders caused by stress respond well to long term treatment.

The duration of the treatment can be anywhere from 3 to 18 months.

The **SHORT TERM TREATMENT** option is designed to create a “time out” phase for the individual and intends to allow for recovery and meaningful self reflection. Problem solving strategies will be employed through the process of coaching and the creation of better self awareness to assist in the development of new perspectives and behavioral strategies. Group therapy, as a means for reflection and amplification, is the center piece of this treatment option.

Who will benefit:

Individuals with stable social ties who experience reactive symptoms such as *Burn Out* and stressor related symptoms, mild depression, mild forms of addiction or addiction in the early stages, symptoms of exhaustion, relationship problems, and adjustment problems or disorders.

The duration of treatment can be anywhere between 10 days and 3 months.

Decisions on the length for therapy are made based upon severity rather than the nature of the symptoms or the diagnosis.

THE PILLARS OF THERAPY

PSYCHOLOGICAL/PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC TREATMENT

Reduced ability to express emotions, inappropriate ways of dealing with aggression, and low ability to manage conflict are oftentimes tied to psychosomatic disorders. Psychological and psychotherapeutic work is geared towards the creation of awareness and towards the strengthening of these areas. The creation of an understanding of the disorder as a symptom is a key piece of the process. Great importance is placed on the identification and work on underlying hurtful or damaging past experiences that act as drivers and assist in the development of the disorder. Further, the role and position taken by the client within his/her social system is acknowledged in order to achieve insight, identify new options, and enable meaningful change.

What we offer:

Individual therapy, group therapy, family and relationship therapy, psychological counselling, diagnostic assessments, crisis intervention, coaching, and behavioural training and skills building.

Individual and group therapy sessions utilize a variety of methods including talk therapy, body work, and art therapy.

Focus groups: Women's groups, men's groups, streaming theatre, LandART groups, topic focused groups (e.g. nicotine addiction, PTSD, eating disorders, behavioural based approaches for anxiety disorders, self help groups)

MEDICAL TREATMENT AND CARE

Psychosomatic disorders require holistic treatment. Unfortunately many affected individuals do not realize the need for treatment that reaches beyond the medical model.

In order to integrate all necessary treatment, *Therapiesalon* provides excellent medical care through the integration of a physician into the treatment team. When necessary, the appropriate medications will be prescribed in order to stabilize possible acute symptoms and guarantee best possible therapeutic practice.

In addition to medical care, alternative methods of healing are utilized. Massage therapy has a positive influence on the body since clients experiencing psychosomatic disorders tend to suffer from increased tension in muscles and from blockages in the flow of energy.

Medical assessments will assist the client in understanding the nature of symptoms and the need for healing while identifying the boundaries of medical intervention and identifying more inclusive pathways to healing.

What we offer:

Regular medical consultations by specialists and general practitioners
therapeutic massage
Jacobson Progressive Muscle Relaxation

ADVENTURE AND EXPERIENTIAL THERAPY/MOVEMENT

A key piece of the therapy concept is the extension of the therapeutic setting into the natural surroundings of the Viennese Alps. The experience of self and the therapeutic encounter do not take place exclusively within the therapy room, but rather are experienced during healthy and sensual activities in nature.

Deceleration and decreased stimulation allow for new definitions and experiences of daily life.

In Victor Frankl's terms, the significance of the mountain experience lies in the flow between a contemplative, meditative quality of experience and the concentrated, focused aspect, which is necessary in order to overcome obstacles.

Physical movement and experiential therapy are analogical to the process of learning to find the individual right pace and to utilize movement and physical sensation as a source for sensuous experience.

Therapeutic activities are adapted to the individual abilities of the client and range from simple walks in the woods to challenging mountain and adventure sports.

An impulse for change is created by "getting up and moving" – these are steps leading out of the constraints and isolation of the disorder.

What we offer:

Nature and adventure therapy:

hikes, climbing and ski tours, snow shoe walks, mountain biking, white water canoeing, meditative running, Nordic walking, walks in the woods, horseback riding,

Movement and sports:

Gymnastics, swimming, tennis, badminton, volleyball, table tennis, squash, soccer, skiing, sledging, biking, jogging

HARMONIZATION AND RELAXATION/DECELERATION

This pillar is a perfect supplement to all other areas of therapy due to its enjoyable nature. Self healing powers are activated through the application of a variety of physical treatments and through energy work. The flow of energy is strengthened and harmonized resulting in increased wellbeing and self confidence. The diverse treatment options are intended to vitalize and strengthen on a physical, mental, and emotional level. The process of regeneration is accompanied and reinforced. The relaxing component of the treatment promotes stress reduction, the ability to wind down and come to rest. Deceleration can take place through the interaction of relaxation therapy with experiential therapy, leading to especially fruitful outcomes. A changed sense and perception of the own body and changed sensations within the body lead to "being comfortable in one's own skin", an outcome that will enable healthy and better sleep.

What we offer:

Bowen therapy, Shiatsu, therapeutic drumming, yoga, techniques of mediation, singing and sound bowl therapy, sound massage therapy, kinesiology, relaxation techniques

INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT PLANS

Preparation

An informational consultation will address problems, needs and expectations. After determining therapy goals, a timeline based on realistic expectations will be created and a decision on long or short term therapy is made. If expectations or goals remain unclear, it will still be possible to begin therapy and make decisions on the duration of the therapy during the initial phase. We are committed to admitting individuals to our programs immediately, if necessary. Treatment formalities can be completed after admission. The private setting of our facility offers security and guarantees absolute confidentiality.

Intake

The intake, consisting of an initial interview and recording of the client's history, is conducted by one of our psychotherapists or psychologists. The therapy contract is discussed and signed. The next steps will require:

- Medical, psychiatric examination, possible adjustment of medication, screening of existing medication
- Introduction to the therapy group
- Focused individual consultation
- Creation of an individual treatment plan
- Assignment of an individual therapist

Goals will be narrowed down and aligned; strong emphasis is placed on the client's involvement in the creation of the therapy plan. The intimate setting of a small therapeutic community allows for easy integration into the therapy group and supports a familiarizing with the structure of the therapy.

TRAUMA, STRESSOR RELATED DISORDERS, BURN OUT

“Doesn’t everyone complain about stress these days? However, it is forgotten that one of the early researchers on stress, Hans Selye, made a distinction between “distress” and “eustress”, one being responsible for illness, the other regarded as health promoting stress. The latter can be regarded as “the salt of life” or “the spice of life”.

Victor Frankl

Burn out can be understood as the result of negative stress resulting in a burning up and depletion of achievement potential. The dose of challenges with which an individual confronts him/herself is constantly increased, finally leading to a stark imbalance between the own energy levels and the extreme demands. Healthy and pleasurable leisure activities take a back seat. When relationship problems emerge in addition to a displaced work/life balance, it is high time for therapeutic intervention.

Advanced symptoms of Burn Out and stressor related disorders manifest themselves through exhaustion, chronic irritation, persistent inability to experience positive emotions and dissociative or paranoid symptoms. The use of intoxicating substances oftentimes constitutes an attempt to compensate or self medicate.

Stressor related disorders often present through somatic symptoms and depression, including suicidal ideation oftentimes followed by plans or actions of self harm. Due to significantly decreased levels of functioning outpatient treatment becomes inadequate at this stage of the disorder; a “time out” is achieved through residential treatment.

FOCUS OF TREATMENT

In addition to intensive coaching, psychotherapeutic and psychological care, the acquisition of skills such as learning to utilize relaxation techniques and the promotion of healthy movement and meditative practice is key.

On the other hand, the experience of “positive stress” through healthy physical activity is promoted by challenging the own body in the natural environment and is geared towards an increase of functioning. Analysis of the individual’s work/life balance will promote the development of necessary strategies for change. Energizing applications of physical therapies assist in the revitalization and elevation of energy levels.

The therapy group will put perceived needs and pressures into perspective by mirroring expectations of self. Rediscovery of human needs and human nature that negate a robotic existence will restore adequate functioning and well being.

DEPRESSION

Unfortunately, the majority of depressive disorders remain untreated even though this causes a high degree of suffering for the individual and the individual's social and personal environment. It is estimated that possibly more than half of the patients consulting a primary physician may actually be suffering from "masked" depression. Masked depression pertains to vague physical symptoms that mask or hide a psychological syndrome or disorder. Depressive disorders should not be taken lightly due to the increased risk of suicidal behavior.

Comprehensive and long term treatment is essential. Symptoms that identify depression are: a decrease in energy levels and motivation, the tendency to isolate, increased inability in decision making, sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and feelings of hopelessness or guilt. Isolation and emotional numbing can be the outcome of depression. It is important to state that the inability to overcome symptoms is not due to a "lack of will or willingness" as often assumed by family members.

BIOPOLAR disorder is identified through mood swings. Typically manic phases are characterized by phases of high levels of activity, impulsivity and increased risk of suicidal behavior or other harmful behavior.

FOCUS OF TREATMENT

Comprehensive medical care is necessary in order to initiate inpatient treatment at our holistically oriented treatment center. The prescription of appropriate medication and the adjustment of medication when necessary are essential in order to ensure successful treatment of individuals suffering from depression.

Regular psychiatric consultations constitute one of the key elements of treatment. Art therapy and activation of energy complete psychotherapeutic work, which is geared towards uncovering reasons for dysfunctionality. Central to the therapy process is the achievement of constructive pathways and adequate means of expressing adverse emotional qualities.

Prolonged activities in nature, especially in the mountains, are known to have anti depressive effects; these qualities will be utilized in supporting the therapeutic process. The increase of dopamine through endurance sports has long been proven, utilizing this approach can help to significantly decrease symptoms.

SUBSTANCE RELATED AND ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

Addiction to legal and illegal substances is much talked about and fairly well known. In addition, a growing number of eating disorders have been identified; these disorders can oftentimes resemble addictive disorders by evidencing symptoms such as cravings, urges and compulsive behaviour.

Besides substance related disorders and eating disorders, an increase in non-substance addictions, such as addictions to the internet or addiction to working are increasing rapidly. Addiction can always be viewed as a symptom of some deeper issue that was in existence before the actual addiction began and is amplified by the addictive behaviour.

The addiction can, therefore, be seen as a misguided attempt of self medication. The rewarding effect of this self therapy is fairly high since the addiction aids the individual in the achievement of immediate relief. A short term strategy, perceived as being useful in distracting, avoiding and suppressing a persistent and unsettling problem, has been created. When an individual suffering from addiction appears to be particularly addicted to pleasurable experiences, typically the problem might be an underlying profound inability to experience pleasure.

FOCUS OF TREATMENT

A fundamental goal is to re-direct activities that create pleasurable experiences and integrate them into a healthy framework. The intent is not to substitute a substance or behaviour, but rather, to help discover real emotional and physical sensations.

Uncovering the root of the psychological problem is of key importance in treating addictions. Utilizing the many opportunities to take part in group activities and therapy is important. Work within a group helps to scrutinize own attitudes, expose self-deception, increase the motivation for sobriety, and teach meaningful behavioural alternatives.

Therapy intensely supports efforts towards self efficacy and related initiative.

Endurance sports and exercise outdoors are ideal methods to counter physical and biological components of addictive disorders and enable more effective control of urges and compulsions.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDERS

Traumatization occurs through negative experiences that exceed an individual's capacity to deal with the situation and render the person unable to utilize self-protective mechanisms. Especially repeated or protracted threatening situations, such as exposure to any kind of violence or sexual abuse, bear a higher risk. These traumatic situations and experiences oftentimes lead to dissociation, which essentially is a cut-off reaction from physical and emotional pain.

Sometimes, the individual experiencing these situations might feel responsible for what has happened and blame self; this can lead to deep feelings of guilt.

As a result, marked negative perception of self and general pessimism, problems with closeness, relationships and sexuality can be typical and go hand in hand with psychosomatic complaints. Observable consequences may be an addictive disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, or a personality disorder.

FOCUS OF TREATMENT

The goal of therapy is to engage with the traumatizing events in order to integrate the experience into the client's personality structure. Stabilizing relationship interventions within the group setting are geared towards the expression of empathy and consolation while increasing the individual's self-esteem.

Working within a gender-specific group may be of particular importance.

Engaging in creative and non-verbal forms of therapy promote the ability to confront and challenge past difficult situations. Re-creation and re-living of these situations in a playful and creative atmosphere can help to express emotion, put the situation in context and place the experience of having been out of control into the past.

Sports and adventure education in nature help in achieving higher levels of connection and joyfulness in regards to own physical movement and leads to the discovery of hidden energy within. A development towards increased self-directedness and empowerment is supported through a number of personal successes.