



2016 Pedro Montellano Good Practice Award

Presented to

Awakening Foundation, Hungary

Description of the project*

When did the project start? In May 2012.

What are the aims of the project? About the Hearing Voices Method developed by Marius Romme and Sandra Escher in 1987 see more in www.intervoiceline.org. The aim of the project in a first step was the adaptation of the Hearing Voices Method in Hungary – Setting up the first HV Selfhelp Group and promoting HV Selfhelp Groups in Hungary. In a second step experts by lived experience and experts by accompaniment were trained by the Awakenings Foundation. Generally, the aim of the method is to put back the users to the life, to the world of the work. To solve their problems (inner, outer). To handle, to cope with their voices. To live a quality life. To find the meanings of their voices. And to make the users operable. There is no problem if we have voices, if we are operable.

Is the project totally independent or is it part of a larger project? As an independent project it fits well in the services provided by the community psychiatry. The participants are users of the Awakenings Foundation Budapest and other community psychiatric centres throughout Hungary.

What is the innovation of the project? The HV Method is a very efficient way of therapy. To find the symbolic meanings of voices and to work on the traumas. This alternative method cures the root of the problem, not only the symptoms.

Is the project based on a specific vision? Yes, it is recovery oriented based on the idea that the voices are not accidentally things. In a symbolic way, they show the personal problems to be solved.

Organization:

What is the target group? (Age, pathology...) The target group can be anybody who has visual and, or additional hallucinations. And patients with schizophrenia diagnoses. Family members, friends, anybody can join us.

How many people are involved in the project? Since 2012 we have a lot of people who visited at least once the group. They are approx.: 150-200 users in Budapest and the same number in other groups throughout the county. And there are at all meetings some professionals: doctors, psychologists, social workers visiting it as a part of their training or as guests.

Who is part of the organizing team? (patients, professionals, volunteers...) The first HV Selfhelp Group was set up by Dr Judit Harangozó, chief psychiatrist of the Awakenings Foundation. Gradually the group was moderated by Dr Zsolt Mérey, expert by accompaniment, István Gallai and Dániel Mérey, experts by experience. New HV Selfhelp Groups are setting up on the basis of a contract between the Awakenings Foundation and other community psychiatric centres or hospitals, which contains 10 meetings of 2 hours which can be extended. The new groups are run by the three experts as mentioned before.

What was the contribution of people with mental health problems? The most part of the participants (80%) like the HV groups. Usually after 1-2 meetings they think that there is a sense of the groups, of this method. Their contribution is crucial: by sharing their own experiences, their own strategies of coping, they can help themselves and each other. Even their presence only is an important contribution: it can break their social isolation. Some need about 10-20 meetings to find the HV group has sense. This alternative way of thinking about the schizophrenia is getting popular. This make them hope. And there are many proof of the method: for example: the stories of recoveries published in Living with voices – 50 stories of recovery by Marius Romme-Sandra Escher-Jacqui Dillon-Dirk Corstens-Mervyn Morris, PCCS Books. 2009/

How was the project announced to the community? Usually through conferences, or by media (radio, tv, Facebook, internet). And through the Awakenings Foundation's clients. It is spreading around people by people. We are in connection with some Hungarian organizations. Many professionals heard about this project, method and they would like to try it in their community.

What was the budget? At first we made it on voluntary basis. The site was given by the Awakenings Foundation. Nowadays a unit containing 10 meetings of 2 hours provided every second week costs roughly 2000 Euros. In that way, the experts by experience and by accompaniment are paid 15 Euros net per hour.

How was the project financed? The community psychiatric centres have to find the financing which is quite difficult for them.

Inclusion:

How does the project contribute to the inclusion of people with mental health problems in the community? First, we fight against stigma. We don't use this word „sickness” because it is a state of mind. Shortly: GOÁMÁ: Transitory Changed State of Mind Caused by Problems. We are not crazy, we have problems, that is all. If we find solutions for our inner or outer problems we can go back to our normal state of mind. Anybody can have this state, this problem. For example: if we lost our job - that can be enough. We don't use diagnoses, we work with people. And we share, we stand for this statement at each conference, in the media.

Does the project collaborate with other projects, associations? Yes, for example: RCM – (Rehab Critical Mass). We made sensitizer programs together in different high schools. We informed the students about mental health, how to sidestep this, how to recover and also how to solve problems without drugs, alcohol which can

lead us mental health problems as well. And how to give help for these persons. How to handle them. They are the same like us. First we have to know them, then judge! We should not make stereotypes! And with this organization (RCM) we made (many of us) the RCM demonstration 2016 in Budapest with participating approx.: 5000 people, users, disabled persons. With this we are standing for the rights and lobby of disabled people. And we want change in this field at government level.

Evaluation:

Is there an evaluation mechanism in the project? The professionals of the centres (where we are used to hold the HV groups) get good feedback from their users (and they are used to let us know) that many of them are on the way of the recovery and we can see on them this as well. We reached a good change. We see the results and the importance and the value of our job this way.

What are the concrete results so far? Concrete results: Many

participants are on the way of the recovery. And their presence on each group. It means they like us and like each other. They have bigger trust and belief. And their social network is growing, we are not alone. They don't feel ashamed. We are fellow sufferers.

What lead to the success of the project so far? First, I think our own

stories of recovery. Our support from Dr. Harangozó that she believes in this method. And our truthfulness. Also our sincerity, we share our voices and problems. We are not alone. We are like a family. We are handholds for each other. We have also education materials, 50 stories of recovery, questionnaires... And our method.

Do the allocated resources justify the results? I think yes, because we having more and more members and enquirers from different organizations and from the media as well. And also we see on the fellow sufferers their recovery and their development. That they can go back to the world of work.

Future:

How will the project develop in the future? We have been asked since 2012 to set up HV groups at different part of Hungary by local doctors, professionals, because they see the effect of it. And this is developing every day, the news of us is spreading around in Hungary. And now, for example, we have been asked to be part of a recent project as experts aiming to create a national network of new mental health centres using best practices. And more about developing: we train experts by experience and experts by accompaniment too in the Awakenings Foundation.

Is it possible to implement the project elsewhere? Yes, with the newly trained experts, we are ready to promote this method using our own education materials.

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