

Report on Pre-conference- Workshop Gisela Perren-Klingler:

Aims for the workshop: Let participants discover, how emotions are intimately linked to the body, that the word “feeling” is not a mere hazard. Teach them how to mobilise them, without flooding the client by the feared (and contraindicated) traumatic emotions, which only retraumatise the persons.

Teach them how to focus attention to the body, on order to confront oneself to a feeling and to elaborate it in its “feeling” specificities. This can be done – even with traumatic feelings- without flooding the person, i.e. in giving the person control over the body perception, by fractioning the aspects of the perception, focusing always only on one component – e.g. temperature, or consistency of the feeling. Central is the permanent connection with the person in charge of the elaboration, with eye contact, giving answers on each question. Also central is to find an adequate (“symbolic”) word for the elaborated emotion, which fits the body feeling of the person. Observation of a congruent answer (triple signs) is important, and one cannot consider ones work finished, if one has not achieved this triple congruence. A breathing exercise to show how the body can react fast and easily (if one dares to impose and conduct)- for self protection as well as for calming highly aroused persons, was one of the exercises. Introduction of the concept of salutogenesis, by using the three parts of self coherence: Manageability, comprehensibility and meaning.

Aims of the participants: The group consisted of persons with many very different professional and ethnic backgrounds: From the Malaysian psychiatrist, to Australian psychologists/ psychotherapists, social workers, (which taught me some of the geography of this vast continent), ministers, a Swiss psychologist, and a fire fighter from Adelaide, many different personal and professional/cultural resources were present. Apart from some curiosity just towards a European, all of them wanted to get to know how to work with emotions in their different professional settings, not always only after exposure to traumatogenic events.

The workshop consisted of some theoretical input and about four or five exercises in groups of three. The groups decided to stick together (“we have now bonded”) for the whole day, something I would not have accepted if we had worked for longer. I think the “promiscuity” of changing in each exercise to an other group constellation, enhances flexibility and lets create new networks, which seem so important to me, especially in care for survivors of traumatogenic events.

In the feed-back round at the end people said that they knew now how to access feelings, elaborate them and name them. The fireman, who in the middle had complained, that my tasks in the exercises were difficult (also for some psychologists, who were not used to conducting the persons with one question after the other), said that he took something with him and that he was going to introduce it with his peers.

Everybody was clear about how manageability and comprehensibility can be enhanced with this method, because it leads automatically to the psychoeducational part – important in any work with persons after exposure to traumatogenic events: Normalisation (his emotion “X” is absolutely normal.....after what you have gone through), you can bear it easier, when you know how to calm yourself – (breathing exercise). I loved to work with this heterogeneous group; the atmosphere was lively, motivated, full of curiosity and friendly. I acknowledge that I was very bossy in letting no time for long coffee- pauses. Laughter, which seems essential for me in such workshops took place. I am only disappointed that the workshop lasted only one day.