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Article topic:
“Art as a method for personality development.
Social benefits of art coaching”

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Art is usually created by internal need and motivation. But what would happen if such manifestation is stimulated in people who have never had experience with art, because, according to their opinion they are not good at it? Will the mastering of a completely new area of activity impact their everyday routine and their regular way of life. Will confidence, satisfaction, freedom, creativity, the strive for creating be able to be integrated and stimulated through practices related to art and the step-by-step gaining of new skills in any of the art forms. This integral and innovative personal development model, called art coaching is a completely new form, stimulating self-actualization and the maximizing of one's own potential. It uses the stimuli of art as a place where the personality trains and develops itself, later transferring this confidence to the rest of its life areas. An important part of achieving development and improvement of the feeling of the Self is the development of high levels of reflection namely, "self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-analysis, and self-evaluation, i.e. what could be called "thinking of the thinking""¹ and thinking about the behavior as a result of the beliefs. One of the most fundamental things in the creative process is the ability to conduct communication with our own feelings, needs for situating and expressing. In the article "Reflection and its operationalization in art" by ass. prof. Romyana Pankova the act of creating is described as a valuable opportunity for building "our own form of inner organization".² This organization is a space for examination and cognition, which the personality can consciously use in its path to self-actualization and as a result of this the achievement of satisfaction.

The classic form of art therapy uses the direction "inside out" as a trajectory for work. The art coaching uses the opposite model which integrates feelings for our own skills "outside in". The art therapy we know today uses art to explore, formulate and extract emotions from the participants in the working group, which will help gain clarity, awareness and to therapeutically affect the "coexistence" of the client with the already recognized, realized and extracted feelings. The art coaching does exactly the opposite. It relies on the idea that there is a large amount of latent resource inside the personality which could be activated by self-actualization and maximizing the potential of the personality. The awakening of the resource in the innovative method lies on the theory of empathic therapy, the benefits of which are described by Carl Rogers in the form

¹ Pankova R., Reflection and its operationalization in art, page 1, <http://artpsychology.net/?cid=27>

² Pankova R., Reflection and its operationalization in art, page 3

of non-directive psychotherapy.³ The supportive environment and the constant skills upgrading in a particular area (the art coaching suggests this to be one of the art forms) reflect on the overall feeling of the personality. The formation new habits in a previously unknown field results in strengthening of a series of personal skills which would have been too risky to build in any other area of life (professional, family, social). For example, if the personality fears communicating with people who are at a higher position, this insecurity could be corrected by working on this skill in a safe environment. The acting, art and dance therapy are examples of situations in which the participant could act and correct his feeling of inferiority and to transform it into an adequate self-evaluation, confidence and ability for assertive communication.

The authenticity deficit in the modern person is defined as a problem in the work of many authors in the last 50 years. Names like Viktor Frankl, Carl Rogers, Rollo May alarm for an existential vacuum and loss of sense. The author suggest that the scholar thought should look for new horizons, by which a conception could be reached that gives clarity about the path towards which the personality should be directed in order to find better awareness for its own value and authentic needs. The digitalization and the dynamic of the world drastically increase the need of actualization of the driving ideology. The way of live, the implied behavior models, the media flood with filtered and manipulative informational wave, sharply distort the person's worldviews, making him a follower of the consumerism as a way of life and a criterion for success and achievement.

In order to execute the process that separates the person from this feeling, a new focus and environment is necessary, that will direct the personality towards such activity. In the inertia of implied outer goals and pseudo-values, more and more people suffer crisis of the personality as a result of this situation. This is proven by the researches of the World Health Organization which show that 322 million people suffer from different forms of depression. Despite the huge informational flow which allows measures to be taken, according to the same researching organization, hardly 10 % of those who suffer undergo the necessary treatment.⁴ The futuristic conceptions predict that 15 % of the adult population will suffer from depression at some moment.⁵ This is to a great extent as a result of the technical and corporate progress which have too high temp and

³ Georgieva R., The psychotherapy of Carl Rogers, Iztok – Zapad, 2012, page 11

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>

⁵ <https://www.verywellmind.com/depression-statistics-everyone-should-know-4159056>

the inner world of the person and his values have difficulties to assimilate and don't utilize in the best possible way.

The experience of the art coaching methodology has a social responsibility. The value of its mission is that its idea is to remind the person for his feelings, alternatives of the repression, the depression and the distancing from his own ideals. A main goal of the methodology is re-gaining control and responsibility, taking action and making pro-active decisions – something which the inert person doesn't do, because he follows those of others and denies to take responsibility for them. Similar to the definition of art, which includes the correlation of categories such as “knowledge” and “pleasure”, the art coaching aims exactly at connecting those two concepts – acquiring knowledge about our own personality through the pleasure of making art. Maximizing our own potential is a main purpose of the training program. The methodology tries to improve not only the physical abilities of the individual in the particular form of art, but also to integrate the benefits of the acquisition of this new ability in the overall feeling of the Self about his own abilities, considering them as such with high, open and limitless potential.

The method gives to those who seek development of their personality an interesting, satisfying and aesthetic way to know themselves, their skills and potential. By gaining skills in any of the art forms, the personality trains its sense of coping not only with this particular new activity, but with anything new as a whole. The coaching as a conscious leading the inner dialogue in the client, when facilitated well enough reminds about the wide potential and the character of the actualizing self, that lies in human nature. The constancy in the improvement of skills in a new field, helps to gain confidence and as a result to reach better autonomy in formulating an authentic value.

The conformism, the group and corporate thinking are the main reason why the modern person is so distanced from his own essence, sense and ideals. The structures of the large companies suppress people and make them inert, away from their real feelings about themselves, about their desires and dreams. The people follow implied social and media trends that express in being by all means successful, rich, beautiful and famous. The paradox is that the closer people get to these so much desired concepts, the more unsatisfied they become. This is due to the fact, that these are not actually their authentic searches and beliefs, but they are implied by the pressure of social actuality. In this sense, the role of art is to help people, especially those in business, where

repression is quite distinctive to get closer to themselves. To learn how to be spontaneous, to lead communication with themselves, to know themselves better.

The methodology is connected to the use of different forms of art – drawing, dancing, acting, which are performed as art trainings on an individual level and on corporate level as well. The purpose is that people integrate art in their life so they can improve the way they present themselves in front of the world and in front of themselves. In this way they could become more intuitive about their own purposes, dreams and abilities for realization. The purpose is multilayer improvement with the help of art – of the personality, of its relation with the others, the way the person organizes his life.

Main focus in the mission of the practice is the person in front of the matter of the sense. The method tries to awaken, to make space for auto-communication, to create new feelings. The work is directed towards the execution of something in a conscious and constant pace. This associatively reminds the participants that proactivity is the only way to achieve and realize. By integrating different skills, which the participants master more and more, we seek a reflection on the feeling of the Self about his own abilities and the abilities that the world offers today. The main purpose of the practice is to lift the person from the conformist pillow on which he has been laying so comfortably in last tens and even hundreds of years. A main problem today are the frustrations, but of sexual character as it was during Freud's time, but frustrations of existential type. As Viktor Frankl says⁶, in today's reality, people don't suffer so much from a sense of incompleteness, as it was in the time of Adler, but they suffer from the intense feeling of losing sense, which is related to feeling of emptiness. This is the main reason for a series of social problems. This is also one of the main reasons why people are depressed, neurotic, = gloomy, apathetic, prone to addictions – food, alcohol and drug ones.

As a benefit to the compensatory incentives to the personality, the art coaching accepts the idea of Abraham Maslow, related to the personal self-actualization and the huge need of it. In this sense, the value of art is presented in the possibility it grants for individual's self-actualization.⁷ The self-actualization or the people who function maximally for themselves usually have the following characteristics: openness, large confidence and feeling of

⁶ Dinev V., Philosophical anthropology, Sofia 2002, page 123

⁷ Tsanev P., Art Psychology, NHA, Sofia, 2008, page 201

satisfaction, willingness to fully live every moment, spontaneity, intuitiveness, or ability to follow their instincts in a constructive direction, a sense of freedom in their thoughts and actions, large level of creativity even in their everyday routines and a constant need of maximizing their own potential. The ideology of the method lies also on the psychology of the art, which examines the similarities between the creative people on the one hand and the aesthetic perceptions on the other hand, as they are states and models that affect the personality. If the topic could be formulated with one question, it would ask the following: if the person who creates art is more sensitive towards his need of actualization, could art awake this intuitiveness in the reverse direction.

The classic art therapy, in which art is also a mediator for communication between the personality and the conscious knowledge, differs from the currently presented model. If the classic art therapy uses art as a bridge between the Self and the problem or the unconscious, the art coaching uses art as a space for training of the personality by which it improves and acquires new skills. Through the experiential experience of the art coaching, the personality trains its feelings through the creation of photography, drawing, dancing, acting. The current method also has therapeutic effect to some extent, but it is not intended and not obligatory for the technique. The method doesn't pretend to be psychological or therapeutic tool. Its function is more a humane one, a social one, linked to the training of the personality towards accepting one's own self and improving the feeling about itself. The main technique which is used is the coaching methodology which develops a supportive environment for the participants.

The art coaching offers a solution for managing and improving the personality of people who are interested in developing and realizing their own potential. The works aim at engaging the personality in knowing itself and the world, going out of the conventional feeling of routine, inertia, unconsciousness, primacy. The tool that the method uses is art in all its forms. The art coaching meets and challenges people who don't have any experience in art.

Idealistic, unusual, but, in fact, so humane, even universal is the tendency to look for a way to build a more humane, tolerant, ethical and aesthetic world. In this sense, the work of the art coaching has a strong social engagement. The benefits of the method from a social point of view could be determined at three levels.

1. Personality level – the feeling for the Self is improved, which defines higher levels of self-esteem, positivity and braveness in the finding of new and unconventional solutions, related to the personal satisfaction and value.
2. Group level – as a reflection, the positive integration of consciousness, the harmonizing of the personality are transferred to the direct social field of the individual. The most probable expected expressions of the improvement of the personality are higher levels of tolerance, empathy, cooperation, sociality.
3. Corporate level – the largest segment in the social structuring. The corporate person in today's business world suffers from the repression and the organizational pressure, which fades the connection with himself. This makes the personality easier to manipulate, reconciled, negative, unsatisfied. As a result, the society gains many distanced, inert, introvert, asocial, unengaged people, which let somebody else direct their lives, make decisions instead of them and carry the responsibility. One of the purposes of the method is to help the personality get closer to itself, realizing its own necessities and value. This could lead to a higher chance that the personality realizes its potential. On the other hand, the goal of the personal improvement is realizing and breaking the group corporate thinking.

The practice uses art as a tool for directing, reaching goals and modeling a dynamic – on an individual and group level. Globally, we are witnesses of a new humane wave, entering all areas of life. Scientific, in the face of psychology; ethical in the context of robotics and technological development; social, in the ideas of social and green politics in business and at all; physiological, developed in the bio-industry; personal in the coaching strategies, the motivational trainings and the personal development approaches. The practices in the art coaching put accent exactly on the humane strategy as a way to reach satisfaction and higher levels of happiness and self-acceptance.

In this context, the method, similarly to Moreno's psychodrama, is used for "noble purposes such as encouraging creativity, spontaneity and self-expression in the community spirit".⁸

⁸ Blatner A., Acting-In: Practical Applications of Psychodramatic Methods, Kentavyr Art, 2014, page 20

The coaching practice uses the future as a work direction. The feedback or the analysis of past events are used only as a starting point of what to be improved and how could this happen in the future actions, which the participant is planning. Designing, planning, action. The future is used as a field which allows modulation and change of a desired behavior. And the past is a constant and could give only a starting point. With the domino effect, the success of learning new things in the art field and the acquiring of skills that have been very distant from the personality, helps to build confidence for coping with what's new and unknown. Part of the goals of the training and the whole program is to integrate certain attitudes in the personality which tolerate the processes of improvement and auto communication. To learn how to learn through our whole life in order to improve ourselves and the environment we live in, this would be what the mission of the art coaching would have sounded if it was described in a descriptive slogan.

The satisfaction on a personality level is not an end itself. The work has an ideal purpose, expressed in the idea of a more humane, ethic, tolerant and harmonious, community, ethnos, world. The little steps in this direction could awaken the intuition, the attitude and the sense in the person for something better, to improve the individual, group and collective self-consciousness in the direction of its life actualization. The improvement is in measurement of the feeling of our own personality, the configuration of the personality next to the others and in the perceiving the world as a challenge that expects a reaction. In this sense the "reaction" to the world or the impact we have on it would be way more humane and positive if we have paid attention and we have known our inner world to a greater extent.

The benefits in the business field

A main accent in the practice, integrated on the corporate world is the need of developing a humanistic tendency in the management world. One of activators of this approach is the act of creation. Many necessities are summarized in it. The main barrier this process to be part of the everyday practices in the routine of most people is the self-censorship for statements like "I cannot draw.". The so implied self-censorship automatically breaks the opportunity to try the act of drawing and what's most important, it rejects the possibility that this act could be a source of pleasure and joy from the process and the result. The American psychologist Rollo May⁹ says that there

⁹ Rollo M., *The Courage to Create*, Sofia, 2017, page 24

are several types of braveness and this has much to do with management. Creativity is not only to create an art installation or a painting, creativity is found everywhere, it could be: the way we perceive the world and communicate with the others; the way we plan our development as a personality; the way on which a manager develops and manages his team. If we ask ourselves the question What exactly human is, we could end up with tons of definitions and not a one whole, complete and categorical concept. The anthropology gives an interesting statement related to this matter, which compensates to some extent the lack of a unified answer from scientific or moral point of view. The anthropology gives the idea, that if we cannot give a full definition of what the person is, we could look for an answer in his creations. Or, what the person could be, if he creates multiple forms of art by his own inner necessity. This gives a single-meaning answer in the context of the high aesthetics and value that the human ideal has. This is the direction in which the social benefit of the methodology is accumulated. As Carl Rogers defines “the fully functional” people are the ones who update themselves and not the updated, because the development of the Self is a process and not an end goal.¹⁰

The art coaching method tolerates and develops the freedom of people to create to an extent which brings pleasure and improvement of the feeling of the personality in the perspective of its immenseness and potential for eminence and development.

¹⁰ Tsanev P., Art Psychology, NHA, Sofia, 2008, page 203

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