

# Systemic Intervention as Social Interaction

The Presentation illustrates the processes that the Systemic Therapist applies when working with people under conditions of great social pressure. Present work conducted over a period of 5 years (2013-2017) with groups of teachers, parents and hospital volunteers (250 participants in total) during the financial and human crisis in Greece and the changes effected over the Consulting courses.

## SCHOOL

### SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT: Prevailing SOCIAL CONDITIONS:

- An atmosphere of disorder, uncertainty and fear.
- Abolition of posts for specialist teachers - lay-offs in the middle of the school year.
- Growing poverty of students.
- Cases of student undernourishment, mainly at primary school.
- Increase in incidents of violence and clashes between students....

Among adolescents, arise the cases of stress, conflict behaviors, offensive language, assault and coercion between them.

There has been increase: offending behavior, delinquency, theft from school tuck shops, money and school equipment (computers, projectors).

At the same time there are increased instances of isolation and sadness, as well as accounts of serious family problems: parental unemployment, conflicts, dire financial straits, domestic violence.



Peer school learning Groups: Were organized to experimental team groups: role playing, case studies, reflective teams, discussions and feedback, emphasis on cooperation.

#### Analysis of incidents: **Disorienting School atmosphere:**

- What high-risk behaviors are and how they manifest themselves?
- What gives rise to violence in school.

#### In the STUDENT'S GROUP:

- Were expressed feelings, space was created for **open dialogue, joy, personal difficulties and for connection through common experiences.**

#### In the TEACHER'S GROUP:

- Theoretical knowledge of school conditions with experiential tasks.
- Protective factors: strengthening of pedagogical practices - the role of the school in fostering a culture of **cooperation, dialogue, support and justice.**

#### Action-oriented attitudes

were fostered, as well as participation in group activities – units of resistance were formed to reinforce. Positive functional Networks: music bands, film clubs, free extra tuition.

- Connect with Social Assistance Programs- Support Networks: free community clinics, food banks, child and teenage support helplines.

"... man needs to stay connected with others and with society in order to ensure his protection against the dangers of life ..."



## FAMILY-PARENT GROUPS

Aggravating circumstances and behaviors encountered by parents as a result of the economic and humanitarian crisis: constant state of flux, ongoing destabilization, uncertainty, disorganization, losses in income and property, unemployment. **Important issues:**

Feelings of insecurity, humiliation, low self-esteem and guilt were expressed in the groups, with the loss of former social status dealing a blow to self-esteem and self-respect.

The stress of surviving hinders emotional resilience, leading to irascibility and problems of communication and understanding within the family.

Studying the above behaviors, we understood that the dramatic growth in social inequalities and the experience of continuous losses resulted in social bonds being broken (damaged relationships: marital, sibling, parent-child), intense existential anxiety, weakness, absence of meaning life, as well as feelings of anger and emotional pain.



"..Man is the measure of all things..."

Protagoras, Sophist, 5th century BC

Based on the needs expressed by learners and seeking to include certain points as antidotes for dealing with each and every ordeal in these difficult times, we focused on:

### Re-strength and re-construct

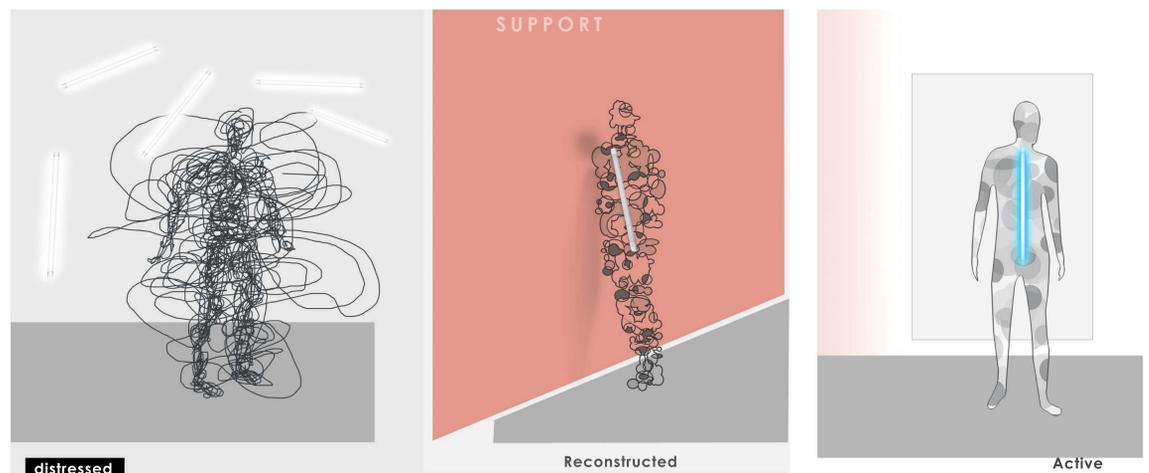
- Human Relationships  
"....being close .... being together", the "we... and "share....", in the fundamental structure of Greek psychosynthesis.
- Processing emotions: anger, inner conflict.
- Resistance with conscious effort and action, and steps towards cognitive and emotional equilibrium: parents associations and unions were set up to offer solidarity in the form of food, clinics, and social support networks.
- Redefining internal values and principles that will reinforce a sense of value and self-esteem within the home.
- Empowerment, redefinition in the new social reality.

**The primary consideration is personal motivation, the formation of a new consciousness concerning collaborative groups and actions and the development of a network of social alliances.**

Support via the creation of a network of parents Associations and Unions offering social, solidarity-based works, because collective groups and actions cultivate endurance and resilience and act as a form of defense in survival.

"....healing does not mean that there is no longer a wound, it means that the wound no longer controls our lives....."

Native American proverb



## THE THERAPIST - PERSONAL DIALOGUE

The personal process of the therapist over the 5 years working in the groups:

The humanitarian and economic crisis affected the therapist on many levels:

The social dimension was ever-present, at times allowing for the processing of personal insecurities, fears, sadness, injustice and at times reinforcing empathy, emotional reconstruction, emotional equilibrium.

### The internal dialogue was present.... constantly....

As Systemic Therapists, we know that emotions are also systemic phenomena: they emerge and become apparent in the spectrum of interactions and the co-evolution of each group. The role of the therapists was to manage what happens in such human interaction and how the role of therapist-educator will process your inner voices and personal conflicts so as to be able to express authentically the supportive and helping role to the people and their context.

**It was a continuous dialectical and process-based relationship with social changes, which brought about inner transitions**

**from distress to relief      ... from weakness to fight      ... from despair to active social engagement**

The positive interaction had a similar effect on the groups. It not only helped, step by step, to forge ties and build support, but it also led to the formation of small social networks (of teachers, parents, and other social groups) that created small units of mutual support. It strengthened human connection, cultivated a sense of freedom and a "...not giving up..." mindset, a sense of there being a way out, but above all the value of human bonds.

".... If you can't find spring, you make it....."

Poet Odysseas Elytis



Resources

Agazarian Yvonne, "Systems-Centered Therapy for Groups", pub. Armos, 2014

Poulopoulos Charalampos, PhD, "Fear, crisis and the breakdown of social cohesion", Pub. Topos 2014

Polemi-Todoulou "The Systemic approach: key to a new educational plan", Metalogos, Systemic Approaches & Psychotherapy (18), M.(2010)

Stamos Papastamou, Ed. "Intergroup Relations", Dept. of Sociology Panteion University, Pub. Odiseas, 1999

Maria Aggelou "Aggression and violence in school and in the family", one-day conference, Municipality of Thessaloniki, 2013

Maria Aggelou, "The Family and The School Community", one-day conference, Municipality of Thessaloniki 2015

Maria Aggelou, "Interactions in a Changing Society", 9th Conference NOPG (National Organization of Psychotherapy of Greece), 2018

AUTHOR: Maria Aggelou, M.A. Systemic Psychotherapist, E.C.P, EFTA-CIM, HELASYTH President, Greece

Method: Systemic-Dialectic- Multilevel Approach