

Workshop Gentle teaching in Psychomotor therapy

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Introduction

Question to the public:

On a scale from 0 to 5: How connected do you feel with this group of people in this room?

What is your favourite color?

Write the answers down. Thank you.

Welcome at the workshop Psychomotor Therapy and Gentle Teaching

Introduction of myself

My name is Emiel van Stiphout. I studied Physical Education and in 1984 I became a PE-teacher. I worked mostly with people with disabilities; physical, sensory or mental. And sometimes a combination of them. Since 1989 I work for the Prinsen Foundation in Purmerend as a member of the section Movement Agogie, which is an expanded version of physical education for people with disabilities. Later I specialised in Psychomotricity and I started working as a psychomotor therapist in 1993.

In the nineties of the last century the Prinsen Foundation came in contact with John McGee and we embraced his ideas and method of Gentle Teaching. I followed several in-service courses in GT, and since then Gentle teaching is an inseparable part of my way of working with people with a mental disability.

What is PMT = Psychomotor Therapy?

Experience game:

Walk through the room with your head bent, as if you are walking in a tunnel which is just too small to walk upright.

Now walk upright and greet every person you encounter with a smile.

Thank you.

Can you tell me about your thoughts and emotional state when you walked through that tunnel?

Can you tell me about your thoughts and emotional state when you walked upright greeting each other?

Definition: Psychomotricity is a way of educational or therapeutic intervention aimed at the development of motor expressive and creative possibilities through the body, which leads psychomotricity to focus their activity and interests in the movement and the human act, including all the results arising from it: dysfunctions, pathologies, stimulation, learning, etc. (Berruezo, 1995)

That's pretty impressive, don't you think?

Well then, let me explain what PMT is, like you're a ten-year-olds.

Do you know gymnastics or sports?

You do that in school in a PE-lesson to learn about movements and tricks like a somersault, a lay-up shot or high jump.

You can also do sports for leisure-activity.

To the public: What sports do you do?

And what do these activities bring you beside a pleasant way of spending time?

So... you can use these activities to learn about yourself and learn to solve problems or cope with difficult situations. In PMT you can have new experiences, you can experiment with new behaviour and see how you like it and how it can help you in life.

E.g.:

When someone is depressed, how will they walk: Slow, dragging their feet, head bent down and looking at the ground. They look sad and gloomy. The emotional state will affect the way they move and the looks of the face.

When someone is cheerful, how will they walk: Lightly, full of energy, head up and looking around. They smile. Again, the emotional state will affect the way they move and the look on their face.

Psychomotricity claims that it works both ways. The emotion affects the motricity, but the way you move and express yourself also affects your emotions. So, through the motricity and body-awareness we can influence emotions and behaviour. That's the main tool of Psychomotor Therapy.

Experience game:

On your chair you found a balloon. Please blow it up and tie a knot. Now tip it in the air. All together you try to keep as much balloons in the air as possible.

E.g. For example: We play badminton with a balloon and try to keep the balloon in the air. How long do you think we can do that? 5 times! And then we do that and often we can play a rally of ten or twenty. So that makes you proud.

The key word is success!

I have several convictions in my working practice:

- Everybody is valuable to work with
- The possibilities are more important than the limitations or handicap

- When the person has a certain degree of autonomy and say over the things you do in therapy, then the result will improve, because there is more motivation, commitment and acceptance of the perspective
- Having fun together and being satisfied over the result are conditions to work together to achieve the goals.

How do I use Gentle Teaching in my work as a psychomotor therapist?

1. In the way of making contact: I'm nearby, I use my hands to make contact.
2. I'm open, honest and curious
3. I invite the person to tell about themselves; I offer space and let them know, that I appreciate what they say.

Experience game:

Spread the word. Make six groups and line up. We're going to play telephone.

Nr 1 gets a card with a text. You whisper this line in the ear of your neighbour without the others hearing it. Nr 2 whispers it to nr. 3 and so on. The last person in the line says the sentence out loud so nr. 1 can check if the sentence is correctly spread.

What have you experienced with this game?

Did the person that whispered, use their hands to make contact? How did it feel?

How did you experience the voice? Warm? Staccato? Smooth?

Did you look each other in the eyes, before or after you passed the sentence on?

This is a good game to let the other feel the tools of Gentle teaching.

About the client group:

My client groups [pupils, kids, grown-ups] often come to me with a problem on aggression and emotion.

Too much aggression and too much or too little emotion. And they all have problems in controlling it.

Every time they hear: STOP IT! DON'T DO THAT! GO AWAY!

A child or an adult with aggression behaviour is often set apart, separated from the group, left alone. And many of them have experienced punishment in a way of physical or verbal abuse.

This has triggered a lot of fear and anger, often at a young age.

But what is the message of the person that is acting out? What do they mean to say?

*It's not going well! I'm scared! I don't understand this situation or what I should do now!
HELP ME!!!*

The message is an emotional message.

And then we want to help, but that's unsafe and tricky when you're being beaten or shouted at by the person needing help. So, the aggressive behaviour has to stop as a condition of safety and co-operation.

And that's just so difficult for the person. Once the button is pushed, the chain of acting can't be stopped; at least not by themselves.

So here starts the teaching part: One must learn about the effect of their behaviour on themselves and on the people around them. And they must learn about social rules and how they can explain how they feel in a way that people accept them and are willing to help them and give them some trust.

I get a person that expresses themselves in a clumsy, unsafe manner.

The main goal is then: Learn to tell what is wrong or what bothers you.

The Expressed Emotion (EE) must level down and you must know how you can say things to others.

We focus on three skills:

1. How to become quiet, when the adrenaline roars through your veins
2. Take initiative, take control in a safe and adequate way and accept that you can share this role with other people around you
3. Learn how to give words to your emotions and express the emotions in an adequate way

Skill 1: becoming quiet, when you have a high adrenaline level and feel emotional chaos

- Grounding
- Breathing exercises
- Sensory relaxation, body-awareness
- Practicing with controlling your stress level

Skill 2: playing with initiative and control

Some persons never take control in a situation, therefore no one will take them into account.

Other ones take too much initiative and try to rigidly hold control

They both stand in the way for a balanced learning process.

We experiment with the roles of leading and following on all kind of levels.

Skill 3: Expressing emotions in an adequate way

By naming how you feel and how I feel in a situation the client gets used to using the words and expressions that you need and can help to tell about your emotional state, about things you want or things you don't want.

In the playing you are in a positive mood. You're cheerful, happy, excited and active.

In working together you are serious and focussed. Sometimes it's difficult and tough, but when we succeed it gives a great feeling of satisfaction.

In a conflict you feel frustration, impotence, anger, disappointment, grief or fear. And a passion to make it right again.

By using these words as a verbal example for the emotions we experience, the pupil gets used to name the emotions and so they improve their vocabulary on the matter.

How is Gentle Teaching helping me in working on these items?

The **unconditional presence and close proximity** are needed to build a trusting relationship.

Only then the client thrust themselves to tell the story. It is necessary to be able to work together on the goals.

I often start with playing. Searching for an activity that the person enjoys and in which we can have fun together. It improves the 'companionship', the sense of togetherness between the client and me.

A second condition of companionship is, that we both have influence on and responsibility for what we do. Every session they as well as I come with an idea for a game or activity. In my activity I can implement the exercises and experiences that contribute to the requested goals. In the activity that the client comes up with, I try to create important experiences. I train the assertiveness by notably violating rules. I learn them to use a 'time-out' to discuss the situation and tell me what went wrong.

My **hands** touch one to let them feel how a movement is made. I use my hands to point out the muscles where I can see tension in them. And I also make contact to give support, physically and mentally.

Experience game:

Untie the knot: game with five or six groups.

With the group you hold the elastic cord. Once you hold the cord with two hands you may not release the cord. One by one every person in the group goes to another position by stepping over or under the cord, between other members. This results in a human knot.

One (or two) members lead the group to untying the knot.

To the public: How does this game contribute to the goals of the PMT treatment, that we explained by the three items?

Completion

I hope you have an impression now of how GT contributes to my work as a therapist in working with people with a mental disability.

I would like to ask the first question:

On a scale from 0 to 5: How much do you feel connected with this group of people in this room?

Thank you for your attention and co-operation.