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Depression is Grey - Therapy Green!

The "New Nature Therapies" in the Treatment of Depression *

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In this Internet archive, important texts by *Hilarion G. Petzold* and his colleagues are made available in chronological order by year and in the order of the volume labels. Older texts are also posted here to improve their accessibility. This source is then cited as follows:

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Depression is Grey - Therapy Green!

The "New Nature Therapies" in the Treatment of Depression

by *Hilarion G. Petzold*

Depression does not only affect one's sides, but is deeply rooted in one's life situation and life story on all levels. In order to reach these dimensions in their entirety, a "bundle of measures" must be applied in which nature experiences can be very helpful.

Who has not experienced the refreshing, invigorating quality of a beautiful landscape? Flowering trees and flower beds delight the heart of the beholder, relax, calm and delight. Ecological psychology has been investigating these effects well for a long time - the constructive, healing powers of nature and the experience of nature have been recognized.

The "New Nature Therapies" in Integrative Therapy

Since ancient times, this knowledge has been used in the art of healing and has also been taken into account since the beginnings of modern psychiatry and psychotherapy. Today, the "new nature therapies" - as I have called them - such as landscape and garden therapy or animal-supported interventions are innovative ways of treating the sick and promoting health and biophilic awareness. They are becoming increasingly widespread, supported by modern theories and research. In addition to their healing orientation, they want to raise awareness of an "ecological imperative", in short: "Act ecologically conscious and mindful! In Integrative Therapy we have worked since the mid-1960s in projects of drug and gerontotherapy supported by plants and animals with garden and landscape experiences, as well as with movement exercises in nature. We take a holistic view of humanity as our starting point and, from a philosophical, psychological and neurobiological perspective, see "human beings - men and women - as body-soul-mind subjects in social and ecological environments". They are multisensory and multiexpressive beings that perceive with all senses and communicate with "all possibilities of

expression". Such a broad view addresses the neurobiological-somatic, psychological, socio-cultural and ecological dimensions of holistic health promotion and treatment.

Integrative Therapy is a modern method of integral psychotherapy/human therapy that combines the natural and human sciences and was founded at the end of the 1960s by Prof. Dr. *Hilarion G. Petzold* and his colleagues.

Sensation and Perception of Depressed People

How important this is becomes clear in the therapy of depressed people. They report again and again that they experience the world as grey, cloudy, dark and they find themselves in a gloomy mood. If such moods persist for a long time, then one speaks of a "dysthymic disorder" or "chronic depression". In ancient medicine, thymos is the term for the body sensation, the bodily self-feeling, and this is strongly clouded, dysphoric in this disorder picture. You have a heavy life, you feel burdened. Depressive disorders are among the most common mental illnesses and cause high social costs. The risk of suffering from depression (all forms) in the course of life is 16-20% nationally and internationally, for dysthymia about 3%. Dysthymia and other depressions can be seen as a "syndrome", a complex of dysregulated behaviours that can include severe disorders of psycho-affective life (mood swings, negative feelings), cognitive orientation (negative thoughts), psychophysical well-being (negative feelings, regulatory disorders), as well as social behaviour (withdrawal, isolation, shyness) and ecological reference (lack of movement, alienation from nature).

"Going Green" as a Treatment Option

Such a behavioural complex is not easy to treat because these people have often developed a "depressive lifestyle". Their moods have stabilised, which means that their physiologies are also chronically misdirected, affecting their overall behaviour. What could be more natural than to counter such a "greying" of life and such a passivation of the execution of life with a psychophysiological "going green" through nature-therapeutic and nature-psychotherapeutic activation, through outdoor

activities, running therapy and endurance sports in the countryside?

Cardiovasculopulmonary training (heart, vessels, circulation, pulmonary activity, cerebral blood circulation) is combined with a variety of psychological stimulation via nature's multisensory offer (scents, sounds, noises, tactile and kinaesthetic experience) to influence psychological moods. So-called "green exercises" stimulate the regulation of heat and cold through multisensory exercises. The vestibular (sense of balance) and muscular system receive "green power training" through movement and physical work in the forest. But it's not just about activation and stimulation. Dysthyme people often suffer from meaninglessness and hopelessness, a lack of life goals. They are tormented by restlessness, anxiety, pondering constraints. Here we have developed the method of "Green Meditation" as a practice of complex mindfulness. The sinking into the "green", into the processes of the living through meditative contemplation and deepened experience of nature conveys sense, comfort and joy in the living. The depressive mood is changed by emotional modulation. Depressive cognitions are practiced, one becomes active for nature, for oneself, because nature therapists are always also activating teachers for ecological awareness.

"The New nature therapies" are innovative ways of treatment and promoting health.

An Integral Approach is Needed

The "new nature therapies" are particularly important as a supplement and support to psychotherapies and psychiatric treatments, because it has been recognised that disorders such as dysthymia affect all areas of the biopsychosocial human being - the entire human system with its life situation and lifestyle - which is why such "syndromes" must be treated at all levels: the "depressive body" with a flat tone, weak condition, etc. needs physical revitalization, the depressive mood needs lightening, negative thinking is directed to positive cognitions and emotions by experiencing growth and liveliness in nature, social isolation is broken through group activities in garden and landscape. The "in the midst of nature" is contrasted with the distance from nature in an experience-intensive way. In such a view it becomes clear that a "bundle of measures" is needed to adequately treat dysthymia - especially

chronic ones. Research shows that the effects of psychotherapy can only be attributed to 1 - 15% of the method used, 15% placebo effects, 1 - 30% of the "therapeutic relationship" and 40% extratherapeutic effects (events in everyday life, loss of work, marriage, relocation, etc.). Nature therapies offer the chance to have a health-promoting effect in this large block of the non-therapeutic room through activities in nature, contact with animals, appropriation of an active lifestyle in life. Nature therapies offer unique possibilities for this, which until now were largely closed to traditional psychotherapies and could be used by them additionally. In addition, after successful treatment of dysthymia with cognitive behavioural therapy, the relapse rate after two years is 50% or more - and it is no better with other methods. This problem is not only to be found in deficiencies of the disorder-related treatment methodology, but it can be assumed that the patients were not able to change their dysfunctional, "dysthymic/depressive lifestyle" or that there was insufficient focus in their psychotherapies on lifestyle changes for which, moreover, no suitable methodology was available. Here, as individual clinical studies show, "new natural therapies" can probably close an important gap by creating concrete possibilities for health-conscious, active and ecologically committed lifestyles. The aim here is to invest in systematic research.

The risk of suffering from depression in the course of life is 16-20% nationally and internationally.

Do you have a motto for your work?

Our philosophy is the "ecological imperative": "Act in such a way that your lifestyle does not endanger the biosphere. Be vigilant with 'context awareness' and 'complex mindfulness' for damaging actions that could threaten the survival of life and the functioning of ecosystems in this world. Step in where such action by people in the noosphere becomes visible and try to prevent it. Maintain an eco-phical life practice, preserve and protect nature!" (*Petzold, Orth-Petzold, Orth 2013, 60*).

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Abstract

Depression is grey - therapy green! The "new natural therapies" in the treatment of depression

The text shows the possibilities of "new nature therapies" (garden and landscape animal-supported therapy) in the treatment of depression within the framework of integrative therapy. The stimulating experience activation can contribute to a change in the depressive lifestyle. After 2 years of successful CBT therapy, 50% of depressions relapse. Natural therapy methods in a "bundle" of therapeutic measures for these disorders could contribute to greater sustainability, especially if they are embedded in a new active lifestyle.

Keywords: "new natural therapies", integrative therapy, landscape/garden therapy, depression, lifestyle change.