

THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN COUNSELING

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ABSTRACT

In the last two centuries, Photography has probably been the most powerful artistic medium from an emotional point of view, and today the most familiar for man to leave a trace of his past and his present. The images are travel companions during a person's life, from his birth to his death, such as, for example, photo albums with memories of his own family.

The image gives immediacy and clarity to a message and it is scientifically proven that colors and their combinations generate specific emotions (Di Loreto G., 2017).

Photography is a means that conveys a meaning, a personal look at the world of the person through a lens. It allows you to express, communicate and share both the sphere of your own:

- ✓ **SUBJECTIVE world**, such as emotions and feelings, thoughts and ideas; compared to those who took the image, as well as to what the image represented for the photographer and the person looking at the photograph;
- ✓ that of the **OBJECTIVE world**, as events, news stories, events, represented by the frame.

Photography becomes the promoter of this dual message, as well as the message itself, in its conscious and unconscious value, makes photography ideal as a medium within the aid relationship: Counseling, Psychological Support, Psychotherapy.

The objective of this work will be, besides the theoretical in-depth analysis of the Phototherapy and Therapeutic Photography techniques, to document my experiential laboratory realized with 15 students of Gestalt Counseling School, people who do not use photography as an expressive medium, but as tool to crystallize moments and emotions of one's personal life. These people wanted to experiment these techniques, in search of new stimulus for awareness and deepening their own personal growth path.

The work has reviewed:

- ✓ the definition of Counseling;
- ✓ his areas of intervention in the aid relationship;
- ✓ the figure of the Counselor;
- ✓ the "Integrated Pluralistic Model" that I studied within the Master in Professional Counseling I attended in three years with ASPIC¹.

Within the thesis, it's presented the definitions and the main techniques of:

- ✚ **Phototherapy**, characterized as a: "[...] *articulated system of psychotherapy techniques based on the use of photography ... within their therapeutic activities [...]*" (Weiser J., 2006), of exclusive competence of the psychologist-psychotherapist;
- ✚ and of **Therapeutic Photography** "[...] *consisting of activities conducted independently and outside a formal psychotherapy context. Therapeutic Photography is used by people for the discovery of themselves or for purposes of artistic expression [...]*" (Weiser J., 2006), these techniques can be used by the Counselor in helping out as an instrument of awareness and growth.

Then it is explained how photography can be an instrument of knowledge and self-awareness, how it can be easily used in the Counseling process, and how to use individual methods in the aid relationship.

In order to carry out this work, in-depth bibliographic research, on the topics of group management, on Phototherapy techniques, and Therapeutic Photography was carried out. The literature search was aimed at those techniques that could usefully be used in a Counseling context, avoiding any potential overlap with the psychotherapeutic context. For this reason the laboratory exercises have been selected within the Photo Jolts technique, created for training and organizational contexts and customized to carry out a deepening of awareness, facilitated by the Counseling process.

The second part of this work describes in detail the planning and the details of realization of the experiential laboratory on the use of Therapeutic Photography and Photo Jolts, as awareness-raising techniques, administered to the Gestalt Counseling's students, reporting adequate documentation of the experience, with in-depth information on participants' feedback, in order to understand the actual benefit of these techniques in personal growth and in the process of self-awareness. ***All the contents of the laboratory have been***

¹ ASPIC - Association for the Psychological Development of the Individual and the Community, School of Specialization in Psychotherapy with Ministerial authorization and School of Professional Counseling.

designed, selected, built and adapted for the experiential laboratory by the undersigned.

The results emerged through the analysis of the feedback questionnaires, administered to the participants showed that:

- + **these techniques are a useful awareness tool**, all this has been possible also thanks to the constant interaction between the participants, also activating curiosity and pushing for further subsequent investigations. The figure of the Counselor represented a useful facilitation in the search for new awareness and was for all a positive stimulus, useful and motivating for reflection;
- + **the participants**, during the workshop and in the moments of feedback, **showed great attention and listening to each other**, harmony, empathy and desire to share;
- + **the laboratory fully responded to the initial expectations of the participants**, for some the expectations were exceeded, reporting the discovery of useful reflections and confirmations. Moreover, almost all the participants **discovered new things about themselves**; the few people who have not discovered new things, have found the laboratory a useful stimulus for reflection;
- + among the **suggestions for improvement** of the laboratory emerged, it were the need to increase the time dedicated to moments of interaction and sharing with others; in fact, these moments have been identified as those of greater utility and growth, especially with a view to raising awareness;
- + all participants expressed interest in participating in other similar experiences and would recommend the laboratory as a useful experience for friends, expressing positive words about the results of the lab.

Therapeutic Photography Techniques, and Photo Jolts in particular, are a useful work to add to the suitcase of the Professional Counselor.

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