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ABSTRACTS FOR WORKSHOPS

Q. Addictions – help, treatment and defining problems

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Working with family members of substance abusers - reflexive knowledge production in groups

This action research project is based upon a group leader training for professionals who in their work meet family members of substance abusers. Three different groups of professionals (nine, seven and six participants = n 22) have participated in a one-year training, where they have learned skills how to lead groups and also how to recognize and approach substance abuse-related problems in families.

The training is family-centred, which means that the participants focus both on the children of substance abusers and on the adult substance abuser. The participants discuss and critically reflect upon the different family members specific needs, which can differ and even be in conflict with each other. The participants represent child care, alcohol and drug treatment, and school social work. They all come to the training with their practical knowledge from their own working contexts and give their contribution to the training. As the participants learn from each other, they also get the experience of being members of a group, and they get a personal touch of how group work works.

The action research focuses upon how professionals, who work with family members to substance abusers, reflect upon their own way of recognizing the problems, how to intervene and what the effects of their own intervention might be. The research questions:

- How do the participants perceive the families' substance abuse problems, while talking about them in a group setting of professionals from different work contexts in social work?
- Does their way of perceiving the problems change during the training?
- If it does, in what way?

The training started in September 2008 with a one-day seminar. The first training of five days was in September and October 2009, the second of three days in January and February 2009 and the third and last three-days training was held in April and May 2009. In September there will be a closing seminar for the training project. The research project continues and the analysis of the data can begin. In the workshop some preliminary results of the analysis will be presented.

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From Virtual Chaos to Healing Processes – Addiction help-lines on the Web

The main dialogue between ordinary people on one hand (chat, virtual communities etc.), and people and professionals on the other hand (virtual help-lines etc.), has in many pieces moved into the Web. That means also that the fight between "good" and "bad" is constantly also going on inside the Internet. Millions of people are circulating in the net every second, many searching for help and support, others searching for joy and entertainment. In the western industrial world the World Wide Web became more and more common in the middle of the 90-ties. In the last ten years the use of Internet has increased a lot also in such population-rich countries like India and China.

Any matter that occurs in the "real life" also occurs in the "virtual life". This fact has been a big challenge for us professionals in the last 10-15 years. A big number of Web-services (help-lines etc.) have been started by us professionals in the social- and health sector. The question was how to tackle the fast rising need of support and help. *The main goal with the Net- services is to help people use their own resources and to get the threshold for seeking help lower.*

On the Net is found today a lot of objective information and support, self-help tools, net counselling, peer groups activities etc. Even in non-professional chat-services and virtual communities people talk with open heart and without fear about their personal and family problems. Anonymity (the possibility to keep psychological distance) is the central value in the Net. In the Net you do not have to be afraid to loose your face. The Net is open 24 hours a day. To be "Online" today is as usual as it was before to take a walk to meet friends face to face.

Because the globalization, the earth has shrank a lot in the last 20 years. The life-style in the industrial world has become more and more excitement and pleasure tendentious. Similarity in our way of life and ancient Roman life can be found. Is also our civilisation coming to its end? Hope not!

People search for company, entertainment, experiences and kicks from the Net. In the Web you get a *feeling of emotional control or/and rapid satisfaction*. For example *Gambling, battle games and sex* in the Net can be a bad trap for many. An excessive use of the Internet and the computer-programs causes easily harms in other areas of life. Online gambling is one of the fastest growing industrial branches in the world. Millions of dollars and euro change pockets through the Net every second. You can win, but you can also loose everything, not only your money, but also your self-respect, dignity, health and welfare. The constant need for kicks can easily lead to utilization. Children should not be left alone with the computer!

We can probably not live without the computers and the Web, but computers can never replace the need of face to face contact among human beings.

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Problem gambling – a public health concern or a not notable disorder?

Problem gambling has been a focus of research in many medical and psychological studies but it also raises social and ethical concerns. Problem gambling is an issue that can be identified. Problem gamblers can be helped in the Finnish social work context in several ways.

In this presentation I introduce some key findings and notions of contemporary research by asking

What kind of a “problem” is gambling?

Is problem gambling an increasing public health concern or just one disorder among other (marginal) ones?

What is done and/or can be done to help problem gamblers?

What is and/or could be the role of social work practitioners in helping problem gamblers?