

Letter to Editor. Who should reach for psychotherapy?

The term “psychotherapy” should be used only in circumstances, when the patient, by reasons of the persistence of troublesome symptoms, attend or is directed with his consent to the competent therapist (a psychologist, a doctor) who focuses on a form of treatment called psychotherapy.

The American Psychological Association uses the definition developed by John C. Norcross, who wrote that: “Psychotherapy is the informed and intentional application of clinical methods and interpersonal stances derived from established psychological principles for the purpose of assisting people to modify their behaviors, cognitions, emotions, and/or other personal characteristics in directions that the participants deem desirable” [1].

In this perspective, it is necessary to emphasize that psychotherapy is done not only with the consent but also in line with expectations of people who undergo this form of treatment. This emphasis is needed especially during the initial lectures on psychotherapy carried out for students of medicine, nursing and psychology. Especially young students of these professions often point out that the nuisance for surrounding people caused by mental disorder is manifested by numerous groups of people who do not intend to undergo psychotherapy. Many authors publishing in the realm of the so-called positive psychology [2] and positive psychiatry [3] make a similar observation.

Proponents of “positive psychology” indicate that these studies discuss “how positive emotions, engagement, meaning, personal well-being, and resilience may impact peace at different levels, ranging from the personal and interpersonal to community, national, and global peace” [2].

Jeste et al. determine the meaning of the mentioned notion by words: “Positive psychiatry may be defined as the science and practice of psychiatry that seeks to understand and promote well-being through assessment and interventions involving positive psychosocial characteristics (PPCs) in people who suffer from or are at high risk of developing mental or physical illnesses. It can also benefit nonclinical populations” [3].

Believing in the relevance of the objectives of positive psychology and psychiatry, we could ask in the course of seminars with students, which social groups should rich for the psychotherapeutic help. It can be based also on the daily observations of sur-

rounding people and consideration of the spectrum of psychiatric clinical problems. The attempt to enumerate such social groups enables the development of the inference related to the positive psychology and psychiatry.

This trial can be grounded on the rational criterion resulting from the definition of mental health and assumption that all those who do not meet the criterion of mental health would benefit from psychotherapy.

Manwell et al. using the Delphi method considered opinions of experts related to several definitions of mental health. Majority of these experts prefer the definition proposed by "Public Health Agency of Canada". This definition states that: "Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity" [4].

Taking into account this definition, it is possible to specify the groups of people, who for their benefit and the conveniences of surrounding persons, should reach for psychotherapy. In the course of the discussions performed on seminars organized in the form of focused surveys the participants indicate the following groups of people: alcoholics, people addicted to other substances, co-addicted persons, people addicted to gambling, Internet and other intrusive behaviors, a significant part of people judicially sentenced, people who commit mobbing, stalking (persistent harassment), sexual harassment, persons inciting to violence, persons with xenophobic attitude, a significant part of the so-called refugees [5], a significant number of juveniles manifesting a personality disorders or giving significant educational problems (youth troublesome for teachers) [6], a significant portion of partners suffering from so-called "incompatibility with partner's characters", much of the politicians manifesting extreme fundamentalist or authoritarian attitudes, some journalists routinely making distortions of information and manipulation, some clerics, people with little financial responsibility for the family, people who commit gross to family members, obese people and people suffering from some other somatic diseases.

When in a particular population the size of enumerated groups of people is significant, we can say that the so-called mental public health (mph) is impaired [7, 8]. It is worth noting, that if we consider these areas of the globe where prevail totalitarian regimes, usually the mental public health is in poor condition there. Actions of persons who control such countries certainly cross over the characteristics of the definition of mental health. The citizens of these countries feel inconvenience and experience anxiety, fear, feelings of frustration, depression and hopelessness. It can be said that in countries organized in a democratic manner mph is in a better condition.

We should therefore think about what are the main reasons for the fact that the population of a country maintains a democratic order. Trying to identify the most important determinants of such state of organization of a society one should probably take into account a high level of education. Undoubtedly, raising the level of education would be one of the ways of promoting positive psychology and psychiatry.

Unfortunately, it happens that the authoritarian authorities desire to have control over the educational process.

Are there any possible actions, arising from the idea of the positive psychology and psychiatry, which would be able to improve the public mental health in these unfavorable conditions, when persons ruling the country are not interested in that? It seems to us that such actions are possible. These include: (1) some publicist and cultural impacts, which can be promoted despite the reluctant attitude of the authorities and (2) the promotion of the use of certain accessible, already developed software tools.

In addition to well-known and obvious efforts for the formation of the civil society, the fight against exclusions and strive for social justice there are possible some other steps that will lead to the impacts which have corrective character similar to some forms of psychotherapy. These include:

1. Promotion of not yet realized widely scientific findings that the distinction in any population of people characterized by liberal and conservative attitudes is grounded not only on psychological and sociological reasons but also on neurophysiological mechanisms [9–13]. Recognition of these facts should diminish the controversies between the two components of the population, which turns often into a fight.
2. Promoting the possibly broad awareness that every time when a social group with authoritarian ambitions is formed, there is a phenomenon known from the analysis of the functioning of sects, i.e. replacing personal opinion of members by the “guidelines” imposed by the leader [14]. Such social situations are characterized by the loss of personal identities, which are replaced by the collective consciousness.
3. Promotion of equal rights for men and women and parity (50%) in different social bodies. The resultant actions in societies in which women are not discriminated are generally moderate and pacifist. It seems that in such circumstances the freedom of manners is maintained which is a component and determinant of civil liberties.
4. Promoting statements characterized by the rationalistic, enlightened, scientific, and agnostic convictions. Differentiation of the world outlooks regardless of the always contentious ideological sentiments fosters an attitude of neutrality and tolerance.

The authors representing the positive psychology and positive psychiatry propose some concrete, already developed and readily available tools. Applications of these tools induce a kind of psychotherapeutic corrections [9, 15]. An example of such a tool is a website that allows the determination of own characterological profile [16]. Similar tools are formulated outside the health sciences and come from a wide range of cultural activities. An example is so-called “Project: Truth” by Mariusz Szczygieł [17]. The author of this book urges readers to establish their inner most significant “guideline of life” (inner truth). In the psychological terminology, it is partly an equivalent of so called life scripts [18, 19]. Becoming aware of these life scripts and especially their comparison is conducive to the tolerant attitude. Moreover, it increases a sense of identity, which should have a hierarchical dimension: { I, e.g. a man, a resident of the region, professional, member of a social group ..., a citizen of a state, of particular na-

tionality, a citizen of the EU, a citizen of the world}. Tolerant and empathetic attitude, of course, is favored simply by the promotion of reading. Reading novels is helpful to determine and compare these scripts of life and the formation of hierarchical identity.

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