

partner event



LAGERTA
— WORLD WOMEN COMMUNITY —



SHELEST

Two-day field meetings

«TOUCH TO HEALING»

General information

On April 23-24 and June 17-18, 2024,
two-day field meetings
«Touch to Healing» were held

*** Number of participants:**

- 1 meeting: 12 people.
- 2 meeting: 12 people.



General information

<i>Goal</i>	➔ Transition from the role of the deceased's wife to the role of a widow. ➔ Increasing the level of awareness and emotional literacy, increasing the level of psychological stability. As a result: ◆ the ability to monitor, realize and adequately assess one's own condition, the ability to interact with it in a healthy way; ◆ the ability to withstand uncertainty and emotional pain while remaining effective in everyday life.
<i>Tasks</i>	➔ Provide support and qualified assistance to training participants. ➔ Stimulate the process of restoring inner support through healing contact with the earth and nature. ➔ Give the participants an opportunity to express stress and all accumulated and suppressed emotions in a safe space without diving into the trauma. ➔ Process and integrate the traumatic experience of loss, stimulate the process of transition from the role of wife to the role of widow and healing (first meeting). ➔ To process and get rid of attitudes that prohibit living on, get inner permission to live and have new relationships without guilt (second meeting). ➔ Through the correct living through trauma and grieving, promote the participants' exit to post-traumatic growth.
<i>Target audience</i>	➔ Widows of fallen soldiers.



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ANNA BORODINA

Child and family psychologist. Certified trainer.
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Kyiv region, Vyshgorod district,
Khotyanivka village,
Kyiv Reservoir Dam,
suburban complex «SHELEST»



Over the course of two days the trainers used the following methods of work with the participants

- ➔ art therapy methods (resource techniques, isotherapy, vocal therapy, metaphorical associative cards);
- ➔ systemic family therapy methods (work with family scenarios);
- ➔ body-oriented practices (including Somatic Experiencing (SE)TM techniques);
- ➔ restorative resource mindfulness practices;
- ➔ a combination of individual and group work with a psychologist.





Art therapy — is a methodology that uses the arts (painting, sculpting, writing, drama, music, etc.) to help clients, on the one hand, recognize, explore and express emotions and thoughts, and on the other hand, to use art to solve psychological problems.

Art therapy advantages

- Creative activity as a therapeutic intervention restores the client's sense of control over their own life, a sense of purpose, confidence through self-expression and external support.
- Art causes various psychological, physiological, social and behavioral reactions.
- Art therapy is effective in overcoming traumatic experiences, post-traumatic stress disorders and depression.

- Increased production of neurotransmitters and endorphin level.
- Reduction of depression, negative emotions, anxiety and stress.

Body-oriented therapy — a psychotherapy approach that works with psychological problems through procedures of physical exercises and physical contact.

Physical exercises and practices act as a tool for:

- deepening contact with one's own body;
- obtaining a safe new interaction experience;
- establishing a connection between thoughts, emotions and bodily sensation;
- teaching self-regulation practices;
- activation of internal resources.

Body-oriented therapy advantages

- Prevention of psychosomatic diseases caused by chronically «squeezed» emotions and experiences in the body. Working in a bodily approach allows to release these experiences and prevent their impact on the human body.
- Greater speed, compared to exclusively conversational psychotherapeutic methods. Answers from the body sometimes come almost instantly and the improvement of the condition occurs much faster.
- The basis of work in the bodily approach is the idea of a person's own ability to cope with the difficulties of life. Working with the body helps to activate the client's capabilities and help them to rely more on themselves.
- It increases sensitivity, relaxation, a sense of fullness of life. Reestablishing contact with one's own body gives an experience of more intense perception and acceptance of oneself, knowledge of one's desires and readiness to follow one's inner calling.



Somatic Experiencing (SE)™ — a method of treatment for mental trauma that focuses on the sensations in the body, which was created by Dr. Peter Levine.

- ➔ The psychotherapeutic method of Somatic Experiencing works with the human autonomic nervous system – the part of the nervous system that is responsible for controlling unconsciously regulated body functions such as breathing, heartbeat and digestion.
 - ◆ We don't think about how the autonomic nervous system works.
 - ◆ Bringing awareness to our sensations has an impact on a person's physiological state.
- ➔ SE techniques, affecting the autonomic nervous system, help a person to return to a natural state of self-regulation.
- ➔ The use of this method implies the client's acquisition of self-regulation skills, which the therapist teaches them.
- ➔ The method was developed and allows to work effectively with severe/shock traumas, PTSD.
 - ◆ In the process of work, a person isn't immersed in a traumatic event, they don't need to remember or retell it.
 - ◆ Thanks to this, treatment of the trauma and improvement of the condition is very careful.



Systemic family therapy — is one of the directions of family psychotherapy, which is theoretically based on a systemic approach, the main postulate of which is the impossibility of reducing the whole to the sum of its parts.

Other basic ideas: circular inter-causality, the dependence of the whole system change on one of the parts change, the effort to maintain system homeostasis and at the same time the desire for change.

Family scenarios – are similar life situations that are repeated from generation to generation, learned subconsciously and played out until they are resolved..

Systemic family therapy advantages

- ➔ It differs from other methods by its focus on family relationships and taking into account systemic relationships.
- ➔ This provides an opportunity to create a supportive environment in which all members of the system can grow and change together.
- ➔ Allows working with the entire system at the same time, aimed at changing interactions (which is necessary in the case when someone from the family dies) and strengthening interdependence between members of the system.

- ➔ Practical work with the participants began with exercises for getting to know each other and building mutual trust.
- ➔ During meals and rest time during both two-day meetings, the trainers continued to gently work with the participants in a small talk format.
- ➔ In the breaks between other activities, sharing sessions were planned for the participants (unspun feedback; he psychologist takes a passive position, and the client has full freedom to express any emotions and feelings).
- ➔ However, the participants had the opportunity to share not only at the set time, but also turned to the trainers when they felt the need.



The following methods of *art therapy* were used in the work with the group

- **Metaphorical associative cards.** The therapeutic effect of using metaphorical associative cards is achieved due to the fact that a person fills metaphorical images with personal content and can work with the awareness and transformation of this content.
- The use of metaphorical associative cards during the training-workshop was determined by their ability to intrapersonal work, namely:
 - ◆ identification of external resources;
 - ◆ identification of internal resources of the psyche;
 - ◆ elucidation of the action of resources mechanisms (conditions, methods, motives);
 - ◆ search for new resources – external and internal;
 - ◆ changes in resource use stereotypes.
- **Vocal therapy** as one of the medical and health-improving methods of art therapy, uses the principles of singing and a special system of vocal exercises aimed at resonant acoustic stimulation of the vital organs' activity, optimization of higher nervous activity, and increasing the body's defenses.
- The mechanism of the of singing healing effect increases the human body reserve capabilities, corrects impaired functions.
- During the training-workshop, the participants worked with their voice – they gave a loud sound series, which made it possible to relieve tension in the protective points of the human system.
- In addition, the vocal therapy session helped relieve tension in those dynamics that arose during the therapeutic work, related to grief, sadness, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, etc.

Body-oriented work was directed to

- ➔ Performing **group cohesion** techniques in order to form a psychological **state of belonging** (feeling of being not alone in one's grief) or group identity.
 - ➔ Group identity is the basis of cohesion processes, it underlies the needs of a person to belong to a group.
 - ➔ A sense of belonging is a powerful resource for people experiencing an unidentified loss, provides them with additional supports and helps stabilize the psycho-emotional state and healthy living through the grieving process.
- ➔ Performing techniques for **grounding** (awareness of oneself and the environment, connection with the basic realities of life; energetic contact with the ground, a sense of support that provides good stability and the ability to move) and rooting (sense of security, feeling of the ground under the feet).
 - ➔ Grounding is an important part of the process of overcoming the consequences of trauma, because the better a person feels their contact with reality («the ground»), the stronger they hold on to it, the more stress this person can with.

Also, with the use of *body-oriented, art therapy and mindfulness* techniques, during the training-workshop with the group, work was carried out on:

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| ➤ reduction of stress level; | ➤ mental and physical tension relief; | ➤ resource recovery; |
| ➤ building and strengthening internal supports; | ➤ release of emotional tension; | ➤ search and development of internal resources. |
| | ➤ relaxation; | |

Process features

- ➔ In the process of work, during both meetings, the participants experienced raising of the dynamics related to various experiences and feelings. However, trainers monitored these processes and provided the necessary support and assistance in the condition's recovery and stabilization of in a timely manner.



- ➔ This was possible thanks to the high level of professionalism of the trainers, one of whom has many years of experience working with trauma, loss and grief, and the other has practical experience in conducting support groups for women and parents of fallen soldiers.

Process features

At the beginning of the first two-day meeting the trainers noted physical signs of trauma, increased background anxiety and stress, signs of suppressed emotions and feelings in all participants, namely:

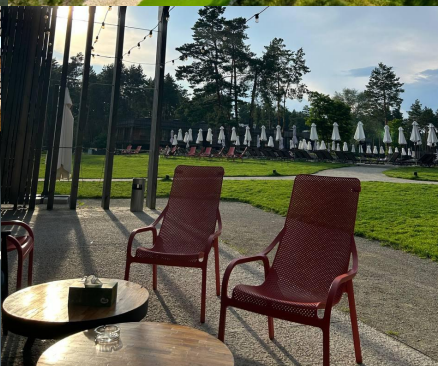
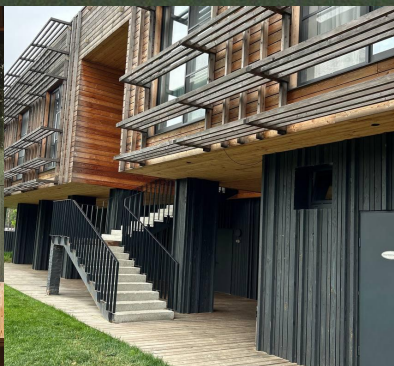
- shallow breathing (with the diaphragm);
- stiffness and tension in posture or a bent back when standing and sitting;
- poor contact between the feet and the ground in a standing and sitting position;
- inhibition of movements and general lethargy;
- vague facial expressions or excessive tension of facial muscles, constantly clenched jaws;
- non-verbal signs of isolation and aloofness, protective gestures (crossed arms and legs, avoiding eye contact, «wandering» gaze);
- gestures of confusion and attempts to regain control over oneself and the situation (beating the rhythm with fingers, rhythmic shaking of body parts).

During the entire two-day meeting the trainers monitored the participants' condition. And already on the second day there were noticeable and obvious changes in the condition of the participants:

- breathing became deeper (with the stomach) and calmer;
- even, but mobile posture;
- feet stand firmly on the ground, pressed against it with the entire surface in a standing and sitting position;
- lethargy and tension disappeared, movements became more energetic, but smoother;
- facial expressions reflect different emotions, don't freeze, in a state of rest – the face is relaxed;
- non-verbal signals of openness to communication (arms/legs not crossed, hands open with palms up, an interested look at the interlocutor);
- a comfortable, relaxed sitting on the entire surface of the seat (a sign of a feeling of peace and comfort).

Process features

- ➔ The location was perfect for holding meetings.
- ➔ The participants had the opportunity to be in healing contact with the earth and nature all the time.
- ➔ At the same time, there were no other guests on the territory of the complex and there was enough space for the participants to have the opportunity, if necessary, to be alone with their processes.



Conclusions

- 12 women went through the recovery process during two two-day field meetings.
- Work with the participants continues even after the meetings are over.
- A joint chat in the Telegram messenger was created for the participants and trainers of the «Touch to Healing» meetings.
- In the chat, participants actively communicate, share personal and professional successes and their feelings, emotions and experiences; have the opportunity to communicate with trainers, ask them questions.
- Thanks to this, continuity of psychotherapeutic intervention in the process of living through grief and recovery of resources is ensured.
- The significant improvement in the condition of the participants during the meetings and the continuation of this process even after their end prove the effectiveness of the «Touch to Healing» program.
- The methods and tools chosen by the trainers made it possible to effectively work to improve the condition of the participants who are at different stages of the grief process and who had different points of tension and distress.
- The obtained results showed both the effectiveness of the conducted program and the need to scale it up – holding similar two-day training-workshops in all regions of Ukraine for the most vulnerable population groups.
- Scaling up and conducting such trainings on an ongoing basis throughout the country will contribute to the creation of mentally healthy, stress-resistant and motivated groups of people who will be interested in implementing local initiatives related to providing assistance to vulnerable and unprotected population groups.