

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy was presented by Mazsalaca Library (Valmiera county, Latvia) during the common seminar "Forward Together" *Field day* in October, 2023. These were 4 classes together with psychotherapist Ivars Bauls, using existential psychotherapy methodology. 4 Friday evenings during September, October, 2022 at Mazsalaca library. Every time gathered more than 30 interested people from county.

We understand the concept of "bibliotherapy" as both a form of therapy and daily work of the library - listening to problems, recommending reading material. There is also an opinion that bibliotherapy can be practiced only by doctors. However, those who consider bibliotherapy as treatment, healing with literature are not mistaken, although the term "bibliotherapy" is much broader - it also includes the process of developing and perfecting the personality.

By participating in the classes, the participants could get an answer to the question: how does simple reading differ from bibliotherapy and in what way can a book be healing.

Bibliotherapy: 4 lecture plan.

1. Life (and death). We are alive but we will die and we live in a world that both supports and denies life.
2. The sense (and the absurd). We have the conscious capacity and desire for meaning, but we live in an ambiguous and sometimes chaotic world that offers many systems of meaning and also denies meaning.
3. Freedom (and determinism). We are free and determined, and we live in a world that allows and restricts our freedom.
4. Togetherness (and loneliness). The human desire and capacity for authentic relationships is combated by inauthenticity, alienation and loneliness.

Each of these pairs is inseparable from its opposite, none of the positive aspects can be fully realized, life is doomed to death, every beginning comes to an end, our freedom collides with our captivity every moment, and these paradoxes of existence cannot be solved mathematically. Therefore, the leading theme of the lectures is a person's direct concrete encounter with the big questions of life, living them through a literary and potentially transformative experience.

The lecturer emphasizes that bibliotherapy is truly effective when used in work with patients who are close to literature and engaging culture in general. It is a research-based method – it has scientifically proven effectiveness.

How is bibliotherapy different from simple reading? There are three elements in bibliotherapy, not two. In reading there is a person and a book, in bibliotherapy – a person, a book and a "therapist" (in this case a librarian). In this triangle, a person encounters their difficulties in a book, survives these difficulties and even discusses them with a therapist.

The idea that such is necessary arose for the head of the Mazsalaca library when she felt anxiety and concern in people – both in connection with *the Covid crisis* and the current geopolitical situation. People should be reassured, people should be told, people should be given the opportunity to understand how they could help themselves.