

Original article



## THE TEAM BUILDING IN COLLECTIVES AS PREVENTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITY IN ACUTE AND CHRONIC STRESS

Tsvetelina Mihaylova<sup>1</sup>, Tsvetomir Dimitrov<sup>2</sup>, Desislava Todorova<sup>3</sup>,

1) Department of Medical Pedagogy, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Sofia, Bulgaria

2) Department of Health Care, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Sofia, Bulgaria

3) Department of Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Sofia, Bulgaria.

### ABSTRACT:

The stress contributes to almost all medical illnesses while the acute and chronic stress - related to work - is a primary cause of such life-threatening conditions as myocardial infarction, brain stroke, etc. The aim of the current study is an investigation of the methods for team building related to prevention and therapy in connection with acute or chronic stress. The accomplishment of the aim set is achieved by means of assessment of the applicability of laughter therapy, as a method for team building suitable in practice. It was found that the laughter therapy may help reduction of stress and tension, improvement of the quality of work, strengthening of the social relations and interrelations, etc. Increasingly more studies maintain the theory that the laughter may have therapeutic value and brings about physical benefits to the particular individual, as a member of the personnel. The laughter is a part of human behavior, and it helps people to clarify their intentions in the social interaction. The laughter is used as a signal for accepting the positive interactions with other people and is a precondition for friendly attitude in the working environment as well. Conclusions may be drawn that the laughter therapy is a suitable method for team building; the laughter therapy is appropriate for everyone as a means for the alleviation of stress, and it has a positive impact on the working process. In terms of business, a positive assessment of the methods for pulling together of members of the collective (team building) may be given by a way which has subsequent positive consequences on their work.

**Keywords:** working environment, stress, prevention, team building,

### INTRODUCTION

The stress contributes to almost all medical illness, while the related to work acute and chronic stress is the

main cause of such life-threatening diseases as myocardial infarction, brain stroke, etc. [1] It is proven that people, who live in anxiety, have a way of life dominated by stress, and also that people, who are chronically depressed, have twice higher risk for development of heart disease.

According to data from the National Center for Public Health and Analyses in the Republic of Bulgaria, an insignificant decrease of the cardiovascular diseases was observed in the year 2013 as compared to 2000. [2] It may be maintained that during the studied time period in Bulgaria, no significant positive effect on the health prevention activities regarding those diseases - which are the main cause for mortality among the population - was observed. The therapy of cardiovascular diseases includes invasive and non-invasive methods of treatment, applied to individuals with the clinically manifested disease. [3]

According to Diggins, "our modern world needs practices for support of people in the dynamic changes and for overcoming of the different challenges". The art therapy, as a synthesis of psychology, medicine, and art, is one of those methods. [4] The artistic expression is an activity involving the brain in a way that may be used for the improvement of the therapeutic treatment. [5] The art therapy is a preferred choice for treatment in different conditions (as acute and chronic stress) as a primary or supporting treatment.

The art therapy - like other forms of psychotherapy - encourages the personal rising, self-understanding, self-expression, and it helps achieving emotional stability of the individual. In terms of the particular individual, the different methods of art therapy create an environment for achieving alleviation of insurmountable emotions, conflicts and problems solving. [6]

### MATERIALS AND METHODS. AIM AND TASKS

The aim of the current study is an examination of

methods for team building related to prevention and therapy in connection with acute or chronic stress. The accomplishment of the aim set is achieved by means of assessment of the applicability of laughter therapy, as a method for team building, suitable for the practice.

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

By means of following the reaction of people to different art methods, the therapist seeks and finds the suitable approach for group work for the respective collective. The laughter unites people and pulls together everyone in the group, based on which it is a suitable method for team building.

The work in a collective with permanently high requirements regarding the quality and terms is a precondition for stress, and people need humor as a means of therapy. [7, 8, 9] The laughter therapy - as a method for team building - may help reduction of stress and tension, improvement of the quality of work, strengthening of social relations and interrelations, etc. By means of the natural physiological process of laughter, the physical or emotional stresses (or discomfort) - related with the continuous working process, not following of the rules of ergonomics in the working environment, etc. - are alleviated. [8, 10, 11]

The laughter therapy also brings about physical benefits to the particular individual (member of the personnel): stimulation of the immune system, increase of the intake of oxygen, stimulation of the heart and lungs, relaxation of muscles of the whole body, causing of release of endorphins, balancing of blood pressure, improvement of the mental functions (memory, creativity), etc. The laughter raises the spirit and causes a feeling of happiness of the individuals. The humor encourages the overall health and improves the quality of life. [9, 12]

The investigators conducted a series of studies in order to examine the influence of laughter on health. After assessment of the participants before and after the humoristic event, it was found that episodes of laughter aid the decrease of hormones, related to stress, and stimulate the immune system of the participants. The laughter decreases at least four of the neuroendocrine hormones related to the response to stress, which result in contraction of the blood vessels and suppression of the immune activity. [13, 14]

By means of laughter therapy, muscular relaxation at two stages is achieved. During laughter, the muscles, which do not participate in it, relax. Subsequently, the muscles participating in laughter relax. The physiological effect is equivalent to "internal jogging", which is especially suitable for those who are not able to execute physical exercises. [11, 15, 16]

The positive effect on respiration is due to prolonged expiration, in which the lungs release more air, which has a cleaning effect similar to deep breathing.

It is proven that laughter aids the protection of heart. The psychological stress impairs the endothelium which is the protective barrier of blood vessels. After the endothelium is impaired, it may cause a series of inflammatory reactions, which result in accumulation of cholesterol in the coronary arteries, which in the end may cause a heart attack. In long-term plan, the laughter therapy as a part of the art therapy teaches that the laughter is an emotional mechanism for stress balance. [17, 18]

Increasingly more studies support the theory that the laughter may have therapeutic value. The laughter in connection with laughter therapy trains the abdomen and diaphragm, which have key significance for the regular breathing, and they - at the same time - are frequently a target attacked by stress conditions. By means of that method of art therapy, a regular posture with erect back, freely slacked arms and shoulders, and naturally, laughing face are formed, which is a precondition for friendly attitude in the work environment as well. [10, 19]

The laughter is a part of human behavior, which is regulated by the brain in order to help people clarify their intentions in the social interaction. The laughter is used as a signal for accepting the positive interactions with other people, and it ensures emotional context of the conversations. The laughter of one person may provoke the laughter of others as positive feedback. That may explain how funny songs and comedy situations as a part of the team building influence the others. [12, 20, 21]

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The various methods of art therapy provide a possibility for the choice of appropriate method for team building for the respective collective.

2. The laughter therapy is a method of art therapy by means of which are united and pulled together people based on which it is an appropriate method for team building.

3. The laughter therapy is suitable for everyone as a means for the alleviation of stress, and it influences positively the work process.

4. In terms of business, a positive assessment of the methods for pulling together of the members of the collective (team building) may be given, which also has positive consequences on their work.

### Final Statement

The art therapy will continue to play an important role in the study of connections between body and mind. That is a dynamical area which continues to develop regarding its increasingly wider application. The laughter therapy - as a method of art therapy - has a preventive and therapeutic effect regarding the acute and chronic stress, and it is an appropriate means for team building of work collectives.

## REFERENCES:

1. Vodenicharov Ts, Popova S, Mutafova M, Shipkovenska E. Social Medicine. Gorex Press, Sofia, 2013: 105. [in Bulgarian]
2. Ministry of Health, National Center for Public Health and Analyses. Mortality by Basic Reasons in the Republic of Bulgaria. Bulletin 14, Sofia. 2014. [in Bulgarian] [[Internet](#)]
3. Garov Sv, Koychev A, Todorova D, Mihaylova Ts, Makedonska G. Study of the Cardiological Health Institutions in Bulgaria Regarding the Flow of Patients and the Angiographical Equipment. Collection of Scientific Articles. Thirty-Eight Scientific and Technological Session INGA. Publ. House TEMTO, Sofia. October 28, 2016: 113-119p. [in Bulgarian]
4. Popov T. Art Therapy as Interdisciplinary Area. Contacts, 2004; 11(42):3-8. [in Bulgarian]
5. Popov T, Alexandrova M, Garov Sv, Mihaylova Ts. Art in the Upbringing Activity. Collection of Scientific Articles. Thirty-Eight Scientific and Technological Session INGA. Publ. House TEMTO, Sofia. October 28, 2016: 9-15p. [in Bulgarian]
6. Goleman D. Emotional Intelligence. Publ. East-West S. 2011. [in Bulgarian]
7. Mihailova T, Garov S, Todorova D, Cherkezov T. Impact of psychological stability on managers' activities. *J of IMAB*. 2016 Oct-Dec;22(4):1360-63. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Cox T, Griffiths A, Rial-Gonzalez E. Research on work-related stress. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. May 2000. [[Internet](#)]
9. Levi L. Spice of life or kiss of death? In: Magazine 5. Working on Stress. European Agency of Safety and Health at Work. 2002; 5:11-13. [[Internet](#)]
10. Parent-Thirion A, Fernández-Macías E, Hurely J, Vermeylen GG. Fourth European Working Conditions Survey. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. 2007. [[Internet](#)]
11. Semmer NK. Individual differences, work stress and health. In: The Handbook of Work and Health Psychology. Edited by Schabracq MJ, Winnubst JA, Cooper CL. 2nd edition. John Wiley & Sons. 2003. Chapter 5:83-120 p. [[Internet](#)]
12. CRR 286/2000 - Organisational interventions for work stress - A risk management approach. HSE BOOKS. [[Internet](#)]
13. Quick JC, Wright TA, Adkins JA, Nelson DL, Quick JD. Preventive stress management in organizations (2nd ed.). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association. 2013. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. van der Klink JJ, Blonk RW, Schene AH, van Dijk FJ. The benefits of interventions for work-related stress. *Am J Public Health*. 2001 Feb; 91(2):270-6. [[PubMed](#)]
15. Dragano N, Verde PE, Siegrist J. Organisational downsizing and work stress: testing synergistic health effects in employed men and women. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2005 Aug; 59(8):694-9. [[PubMed](#)] [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Tetrick LE, Quick JC. Prevention at Work: Public Health in Occupational Settings. In: Handbook of Occupational Health Psychology. Edited by Quick JC, Tetrick LE. APA Books. 2003; Chapter 1:3-18. [[Internet](#)]
17. Policy Paper 8. Mental health at work: developing the business case. Centre for Mental Health. 13 December, 2007. [[Internet](#)]
18. McCauley K, Irwin RS. Changing the work environment in intensive care units to achieve patient-focused care: the time has come. *Am J Crit Care*. 2006 Nov;15(6):541-8. [[PubMed](#)]
19. Gellis ZD. Coping with occupational stress in healthcare: a comparison of social workers and nurses. *Adm Soc Work*. 2002; 26(3):37-52. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Klunder CS. Preventive stress management at work: The case of the San Antonio Air Logistics Center, Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC). Proceedings of the Managing & Leading, Society of Psychologists in Management Conference and Institutes; San Antonio, TX, USA. 29 February 2008.
21. Cox T, Karanika M, Griffiths A, Houdmont, J. Evaluating organisational-level work stress interventions: Beyond traditional methods. *Work & Stress*. 2007 Nov;21(4):348-362. [[CrossRef](#)]

*Please cite this article as:* Mihaylova Ts, Dimitrov Ts, Todorova D. The Team Building in Collectives as Preventive and Therapeutic Activity in Acute and Chronic Stress. *J of IMAB*. 2018 Apr-Jun;24(2):1988-1990.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5272/jimab.2018242.1988>

Received: 11/12/2017; Published online: 23/04/2018



### Address for correspondence:

Assist. Prof. Dr. Tsvetelina Mihaylova  
Department of Medical Pedagogy, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Sofia,  
1527, Sofia, Bialo more Str., Bulgaria  
E-mail: [tsvetelina.s.mihaylova@gmail.com](mailto:tsvetelina.s.mihaylova@gmail.com)