



Principles underlying Anthroposophical Social Therapy

The following principles were formulated in 2017 by the 'Working Group for Social Therapy', a faculty of the Department of Therapeutic Education and Social Therapy at the Goetheanum. They are intended to serve both as a stimulus and as a means of practical support to anyone entering the field of anthroposophical Social Therapy or seeking to deepen the foundations of his or her own work in organisations devoted to this task. They make no claim of completeness and are constantly under review and being developed further. Critical opinions, additions and suggestions are warmly welcomed (siegel-holz@lehenhof.de).

1. Anthroposophical Social Therapy (hereafter 'Social Therapy') has to do with adults who for cognitive, psychological and/or physical reasons have a *special need for support*. In such cases it offers its help.
2. Social Therapy has as its essential foundation the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. In specific terms this means:
 - (a) Social Therapy endeavours to achieve a deeper understanding of man's being. The starting point for this is the anthroposophical image of man.
 - (b) It has its foundation in the reality of the spiritual world and it encompasses this world within its work. It understands every human individual as a person with a healthy, indestructible spiritual essence and whose dignity is inviolable.
 - (c) Its ethic has a Christian and humanist orientation.
 - (d) It has a fundamental awareness of the social contribution of every human individual. No one is only in need of help, no one is only one who helps. Human beings are for ever influencing, impeding and enriching one another.
 - (e) Social Therapy has its origin in the anthroposophical movement and is interwoven with it in a variety of different ways.
3. Social Therapy is oriented, on the one hand, towards the universal human need for *relationships and social integration* and, on the other, towards *personal autonomy*.
4. Without playing down the seriousness and gravity of disability, Social Therapy focuses on the *strengths and resources* of an individual with a need for support. It tries to understand the human essence lying behind a person's disability.
5. The adult with a need for support is understood not as someone who has to be cared for and supervised throughout his life. Rather is it a fundamental principle that every person that one encounters in this realm is a *grown-up*, that is, has the aim of leading his life responsibly and – with help – can also do so.
6. To this extent the adult human being should be recognised as he is irrespective of any support that he may receive.

7. On the other hand, the notion of being 'grown-up' should not be understood as a state that one reaches once and for all but as a *process of development*. This is the same for everyone. We are not grown-up but spend our lives engaged in this process. To have a fulfilling biography appears as a goal in this respect. What constitutes a fulfilling biography is a matter for the subjective experience of each person.
8. This process of development is in childhood intentionally guided from without through education, socialisation and instruction, whereas in the case of adults it is led primarily by the person concerned as a *process of training and development*. In Social Therapy, therefore, the emphasis is on opportunities for training and development rather than on pedagogical measures.
9. A significant aspect of Social Therapy is the *attitude of the accompanying person*, which needs to be characterised by interest, appreciation of worth, acceptance, friendliness and sincerity. Similarly, the accompanying person will not be able to fall back upon a professional role but will always be fully challenged. In professional engagement, *specialist knowledge, experience and intuition* can equally find validity.
10. A high significance is accorded to the situational *encounter* between the accompanying and the accompanied person. It is ideally a dialogue at eye level, founded upon respect and mutual appreciation of worth.
11. Initially, the support that Social Therapy seeks to provide is not so much in the form of direct measures on behalf of those concerned but consists in creating a *helpful and meaningful social environment*.
12. Significant aspects of such an environment are *living situations, work and culture*.
13. The social environment should be capable of being at once a *protective space* and also a *space for development*.
14. Such a social environment was originally to be brought into being by the *inclusive social-therapeutic community* that human individuals with and without a need for support form together. A number of further communities have developed over the years.
15. An important task that needs additionally to be understood is *participation* in public life with the aim of social inclusion.
16. The choice of methods that Social Therapy makes use of is open, so long as human dignity continues to be guaranteed.
17. There is a need for a *variety* of methods and types of living situations, work and cultural life in order to do justice to the diversity of individuals. This is in accordance with a genuine freedom of choice to decide for or against what is available in any particular situation.
18. Social Therapy is not limited in its understanding to providing a *service* for a customer in an economic sense but views both the accompanying and accompanied person as individual personalities who are wholly engaged in meeting one another. In this respect the rewarding of a service does not have any direct connection with the help that is being provided.
19. Similarly, the social-therapeutic community does not aim to be an institution but sees itself as a *social space or community* that is developed, responsibly carried and formed by all members.
20. Social Therapy is an *open field of development*. It unfolds in the debate with social developments and professional expertise and in dialogue with scholarly special education.

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Freia Adam, Paulamaria Blaxland-de Lange, Sara Colonna, Hartwig Ehlers, Brigitta Fankhauser, Jon Geelmuyden, Juliane Gravenhorst, Andrea Kron-Petrovic, Achim Leibing, Henk Poppenk, Leonardo Schmidt, Stefan Siegel-Holz, Sonja Zausch