



## Whitepaper on Anthroposophic Social Therapy

*The following principles were formulated in 2017 by the council's "Social Therapy Work Group". And can be found in the new version developed for 2024. They are intended to serve as a stimulus and a resource to anyone entering the field of anthroposophic social therapy. They do not claim to be complete and will be further developed in the future. Critical feedback, additions and suggestions are warmly welcomed ([info@inclusivesocial.org](mailto:info@inclusivesocial.org)).*

1. Anthroposophic social therapy (hereafter 'Social Therapy') offers support to adults who require *special cognitive, psychological and or physical assistance*. This is where your help enters the picture.
2. The essential foundation of social therapy is Rudolf Steiner's *anthroposophy* whose ethic has its roots in humanitarian Christianity. This means more specifically:
  - a. Social therapy tries to achieve a deeper understanding of the human being. The point of departure is thereby the anthroposophic, all encompassing image of the human being with its three levels of spirit, soul and body.
  - b. It recognizes the reality of the spiritual and includes this recognition in its approach. It regards every human as a person with a healthy, indestructible spiritual essence whose spiritual essence and dignity is inviolable. It is not bound to any confession.
  - c. 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 forever influencing each other, creating obstacles for each other, and enriching one another.
  - d. Social Therapy arose out of the anthroposophic movement and is in many ways interwoven with it.
3. Social Therapy orients itself towards the universal human need for *relationship and social inclusion* on the one hand and *personal autonomy* on the other.
4. Without playing down the seriousness and profound impact of disability, Social Therapy focuses on the *strength and resourcefulness* of the person in need of support.
5. The adult in need of support is not only regarded as a person requiring lifelong assistance and remedial education. Instead, it is fundamentally understood that every person is *fully developed* in their own way. Each person is striving to take responsibility for their own lives and with support is able to do so.

- a. In this sense, above any assistance that is needed, the adult person is *to be recognized for who they are*.
  - b. Being an 'adult' is not to be understood as a state that is reached 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 achieve a fulfilling biography appears as a goal in this respect. What constitutes a fulfilling biography is a matter of each person's subjective experience.
  - c. In childhood, this process of development is intentionally guided from the outside through upbringing, socialization, and education. In adulthood, it is primarily self-directed as a process of *lifelong learning* and growth. Social Therapy addresses choices of education and therapy.
6. A significant aspect of Social Therapy is the *attitude of the accompanying person*, which should be characterized by interest, appreciation, acceptance, courtesy, and sincerity. In addition, the accompanying person should not be confined to a professional role but is challenged to be a person in a wholistic sense. In the professional role, *experience, intuition and professionalism* are of equal value.
  7. The situational *encounter* between the accompanying and accompanied person is of great significance. It is ideally a dialogic encounter founded on respect and mutual appreciation.
  8. The support which Social Therapy seeks to provide, is primarily to offer a *helpful, meaningful social environment*. And in the following different ways for those affected.
    - a. This environment should offer space for assistance and development.
    - b. Important aspects of such an environment are *accommodation, work, culture, and education*.
    - c. There is a need for a *variety* of methods, approaches and options for accommodation, work, education, and cultural life to do justice to the diversity of individuals. Corresponding to this there is a genuine freedom of choice whether to accept or decline different options in any situation.
    - d. A social environment of this kind has its origins in the concept of an *inclusive social therapeutic environment*, which allows for people with and without the need for assistance to develop together. Today there are many social therapeutic choices on offer.
  9. An important task is to understand *participation* and involvement in public life with the goal of social inclusion.
  10. Regarding the choice of *methods*, that are available to social therapy, it is basically unrestricted. So long as they safeguard human dignity.
  11. Social Therapy sees in those that are supporting and in those that are supported, personalities that encounter each other wholistically.

Thereby it goes beyond the simple description of its service in the understanding of its mission.

12. The social therapeutic community sees itself as shaped by a *social space or rather a communal being* that is developed, responsibly carried, and formed by all members.
13. Social therapy is an *open field of development*. It unfolds in the engagement with societal developments, professional expertise, and current academic discourse.

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