



Whitepaper on Anthroposophic Social Therapy

The following principles were formulated in 2017 by the council's "Social Therapy Work Group". The following is the revised version which was developed in 2024.

These principles are intended to serve as a stimulus and a resource to anyone entering the field of anthroposophic social therapy as well as inspiring existing organisations to engage with the principles of their own work.

They do not claim to be complete and will be further developed in the future. Critical feedback, additions and suggestions are warmly welcomed (info@inclusivsocial.org).

1. Anthroposophic social therapy (*hereafter 'Social Therapy'*) offers support to adults who require *special cognitive, psychological and or physical assistance*.
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. It's essence is the anthroposophical view of the holistic human being with three dimensions, spirit, soul and body.
 - b. It recognizes the reality of the spiritual and incorporates this in its approach. It regards every human as a person with a healthy, indestructible spiritual essence whose dignity is inviolable. It is not bound to any denomination.
 - c. The social contribution to society of every human individual is recognised and seen as integral. 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 emerged from the anthroposophical 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 trivializing 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 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 is therefor particularly concerned with educational and therapeutic opportunities.
6. A significant aspect of Social Therapy is the *attitude (‘Haltung’) of the accompanying person*, which should be characterized by interest, appreciation, acceptance, commitment, and sincerity. In addition, the accompanying person should not be confined to a professional role but is challenged to be a human being in a holistic 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 a organisation that works out of Social Therapy seeks to provide, is primarily to offer a *helpful, meaningful social environment*, and, as a result of that, develop individual approaches for each supported person.
 - a. This environment should offer a space that is safe and that encourages 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 community*, which allows for people with and without the need for assistance to develop together. Today there is a verity of social therapeutic offers and organisations.

9. An important task is to understand *participation* and involvement in public life with the goal of social inclusion.
10. Social Therapy is fundamentally open in its choice of methods. The dignity of the individual is fundamental.
11. Social Therapy sees in those that are supporting and in those that are supported, personalities that encounter each other holistically. 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 scientific discourse.

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