

Addressing Powers of Resilience by Photographs

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Introduction

We invited long stay patients in mental health care to share with us their journey into domains of their lives where they can experience a connection with 'a valued life' beyond illness and hospitalization. One of these journeys was literally travelling back to places where memories of the past can be remembered. How did we do this? The patient's mentor nurse together with a photographer accompanied the patient on an excursion to particular places the patient said he/she would like to visit: A football game, his hometown of his childhood years, a beauty specialist, a concert. These excursions have become an exploration of patients' roots, but also of dreams and ambitions: Who do you want to be as a person; how do you want others to see you and more basically how do you want to look like. These aspects that are closely related to resilience [1-4] and which have a great potential to be utilized for therapeutic ends, can be visualized by making photographs at crucial moments during the trajectory. A professional photographer, known with the principles of empowerment photography [4], photographed the patients. His photographs and meaningful text expressed by the patients themselves form together photo stories that in the end were returned to the patients. Also a photo exhibition is organized. The photo stories enabled patients to be recognized and accepted in positive and valuable aspects of their identity and history [5]. This reinforced their self-esteem and made them sensitive to their potential for change, growth and recovery (Figure 1) [5].

We have reported on this psychosocial intervention in a publication, titled: Recovery in Mental Health Care with the Aid of Photo-stories: An Action Research Based on the Principles of Hermeneutic Photography [6].

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Figure 1: Photograph of Bern with whom we visited the museum.