

Dreamcatchers

- *Storytelling project with people with suffering addiction*

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ABSTRACT (first page)

In our paper we will present a research project connected to a storytelling workshop with 8 previous substance abusers and their next-of-kin.

Over a period of one month they, developed a storytelling performance to be performed at a RØST-conference in Bergen. The participants presented stories connected to their dreams for the future. Early on, in the process, it became obvious that several participants had given up on dreaming, because their dreams had been broken over and over again. Developing future-stories had a personal link to their past, which made the devising process very hard on several participants. It was very interesting to see how the delegates supported each other through this process. The group process was very special. They became each others best motivators. When the participants listen to each other story, they can mirroring part of their one life history (Horsdal 1999).

Our research question in this project was:

How can previous substance abusers foster wellbeing through a shift in perspective from fears of the past to dreams of hope for the future?

In this paper presentation we will address the aesthetics of dream-narratives.

Our research material consists of questionnaires filled in by the participants, interviews, video of the presentation, and logs kept by both participants and researchers.

In our paper we will further discuss this project and elaborate our results.

Keywords: Narrative methodology, storytelling performance, previous substance abusers self-respect, dignity, interview, logs

Topics:

Substance abusers, previous substance abusers and their next-of-kin often feel they are being treated badly by health professionals. They do not feel they are treated as equal citizens. Therefor storytelling can be useful forms to explore and develop their self-respect and dignity.

We therefore find this project connected to the two topics:

- Questions of perspective and shifting perspectives
- The aesthetics and politics of distance

Paper presentation:

DREAMCATCHERS

This dreamcatchers project is about

- **Health promotion as a process through art and connection**
- **Wellbeing and the power of storytelling**
- **Give them a performance stage to be seen and heard**
- **How to connect to the future and move beyond the past**
- **My dream, my future, my hope**

The delegates were invited through a video and a text in Facebook, published on the facebook page to RØST (A Norwegian name for sound) RØST is an annual conference in Bergen aiming at giving a voice to people suffering addiction and mental health issues, their families and health workers. Ruth Marie S. Donovan is the founder of RØST, and she describes the main focus on her work like this: dignity and health and health. Respect, love and trust.

The concept of the dreamcatchers is:

- 8 participants (3 men, 5 women)
- Project lasted 20 days
- Recruited participants through the RØST project
- 10 were recruited within two hours
- 8 went through the process
- Started with 3 workshops at the campus
- Individual meetings - one to one
- Drama processes

Our research project:

How can previous substance abusers foster wellbeing through a shift in perspective from fears of the past to dreams of hope for the future?

Theory

- Donald E. Polkinghorne
- F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinen
- Arthur W. Frank
- Marianne Horsdal

The research methods:

- *Questionnaire*
- *Logs*
- *Interview*
- *Videos*
- *Group discussion*
- *Creative processes by making stories (Research through art)*

RESPONSES from the delegates:

- › *«This experience is one of the most funniest thing that ever happened to me. Its true magic! Not only did this experience help us remember our dreams, we now dare to express them, and we are able to communicate them in a way we want to! This is huge for those of us who ALMOST had lost the ability to dream» (Woman 1)*
- › *«Being a part of this project made me find a key I thought was lost. The key to a closed door that I now have access to» (Woman 2)*
- › *«This project has visualized my values to a greater extent. And the way the group backed each other! When we were on the stage, we could rest in each others strength. (Man 1)*
- › *«When i saw my own performance on video, I saw my true self! All the material I had suppressed over the years came to the surface, and my tears was just flowing. This would not have happened if it wasn't for the process we went through as we travelled as dreamcatchers. Layers by layers were ripped off not only before the performance, but also afterwards. This project has given me a hope that I can reconnect to emotions disconnected from me..*
- › *The dreamcatcher project has started an therapeutic process in me. Something is moving and turning around in me... Something has been waken. I that never dared to hope, that does not long for anything, that does not expect much, are now catching myself in daring to hope, just a little.... Thanks for the journey and for believing in us and for beautiful shared moments» (Woman 3)»*

Findings

- › Created a new room in between us
- › Many of the participants told us that they have stopped dreaming
- › Our work with dreams opened up processes from the past
- › The participants are vulnerable: it is important when we open up these processes that we need to follow them up
- › A health professional should join the project – debriefing
- › Togetherness: By working with group processes through art, we connect the group in a special way. The take care of each other. And recognize them self in others stories (Marianne Horsdal)
- › The importance of making a performance and being on a stage was more important that we could foreseen