WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS
EXPERIENCE IN THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES - CEIS GENOVA

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Content based on the daily work of the team at "Il Timone" community

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WFTC - THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY MODEL

ONLINE TRAINING SERIES FOR PROFESSIONALS IN AFRICA

CEIS Genova: Origins, Federations, and Leadership

CEIS Genova (Centro di Solidarietà di Genova) was founded in 1973 by Bianca Costa Bozzo, a pioneer in facing against addiction and social exclusion. The organization began as a volunteer association dedicated to supporting vulnerable youth and has grown into a leading center for rehabilitation, prevention, and social inclusion in Genoa, Italy.

CEIS Genova is a founding member of the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities (WFTC) and actively participates in the European Federation of Therapeutic Communities (EFTC) and the Italian Federation of Therapeutic Communities (FICT).

Since 2007, Enrico Giuseppe Costa has served as President of CEIS Genova. He has been involved with the WFTC since 2010 and currently holds the position of First Vice President, representing CEIS Genova internationally and fostering collaboration among therapeutic communities worldwide.

ADOLESCENCE AND SUBSTANCES

- Significant biological, psychological, and social transformations.
- Increased vulnerability to risk-taking behaviors
- Occasional use may seem normative in identity exploration.
- Rapid progression possible toward misuse, dependence, or addiction.
- Significant impact on physical and mental health, family, and social functioning.

FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO PROBLEMATIC USE

Multifactorial interplay of individual, familial, and environmental determinants

- Peer influence
- Family conflict or neglect
- Exposure to adverse childhood experiences
- Co-occurring mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, conduct disorders

Normalization of alcohol consumption, growing accessibility of cannabis, and emergence of new psychoactive substances have contributed to the increased complexity of adolescent substance use patterns.

CONSEQUENCES OF ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Damaged cognitive and emotional development.

Decline in academic performance and school engagement.

Strained family relationships and social isolation.

Increased risk of long-term addiction and psychiatric comorbidity

RESIDENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

Structured, supportive, and safe environment for recovery.

Integrate medical, psychological, and educational components.

Promote abstinence, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and social reintegration.

Aim for holistic rehabilitation, not only substance cessation.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Establish trust and a collaborative alliance
- Facilitate self-awareness and emotional competence
- Encourage autonomy and conscious decision-making
- Re-conceptualize relational difficulties as opportunities for growth
- Foster critical reflection on substance use behaviors
- Cultivate a sense of belonging

CHALLENGES

- Age and developmental stage
- Comorbidity
- Fragile family contexts
- Poor or deviant role models
- Low frustration tolerance and poor emotional regulation skills

WHO WE ARE

Il Timone welcomes adolescents struggling with issues related to substance use and abuse

- Age: 16–21 years
- Mainly male, with a growing number of female residents
- Early substance use, often combined with family, social and school difficulties

TEAM COMPOSITION

- Professional Educators
- Nurses
- Physicians
- Psychotherapists
- Social Workers
- Healthcare Assistants
- Clinical Supervisor

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMWORK

Constant dialogue allows the integration of different perspectives, ensuring coherence and continuity in each young person's therapeutic journey.

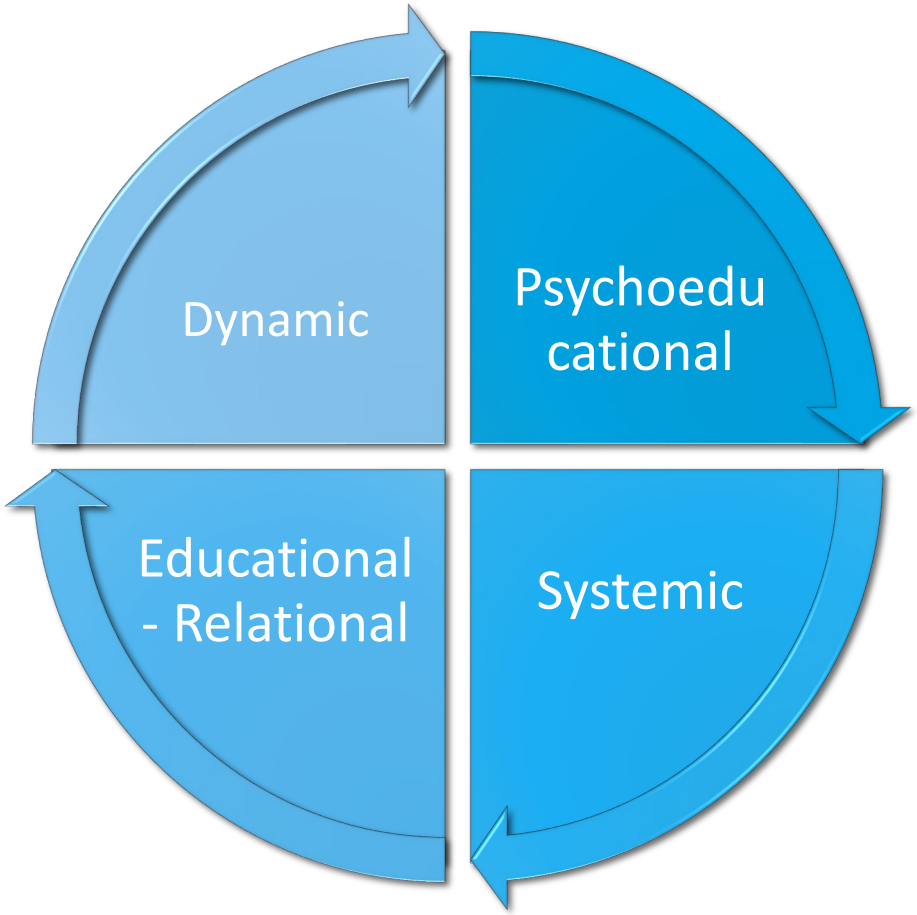
Growth is never a solitary journey — not even for the educator.

PRIMARY THERAPEUTIC NEEDS

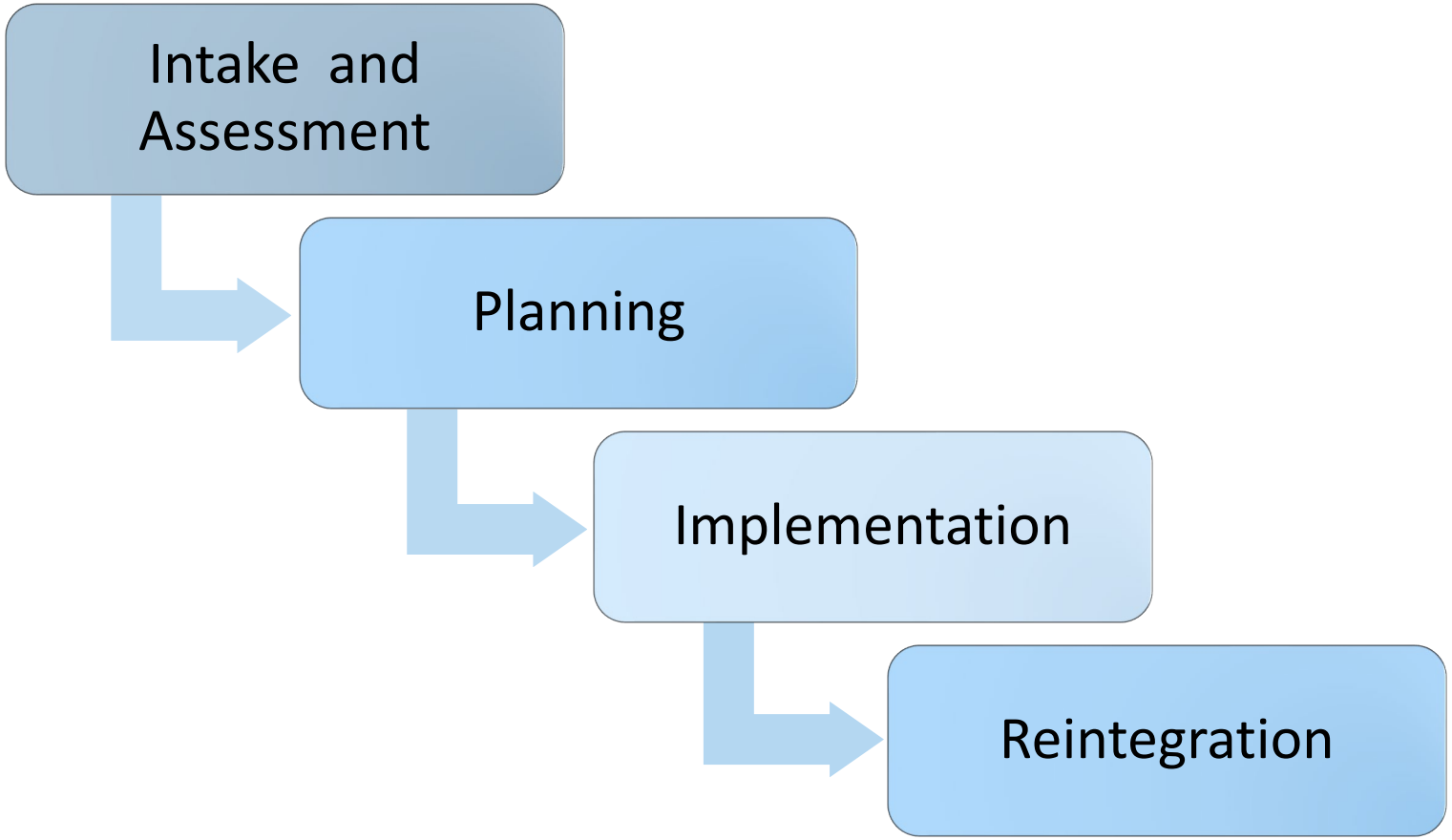
- Sense of Belonging and Recognition
- Emotional Regulation
- Self-Esteem and Responsibility
- Reprocessing of Personal Experiences

A space where adolescents can test their limits without losing themselves.

THERAPEUTIC AND EDUCATIONAL MODELS



MAIN PHASES



Gradual progression of the program

Structured TC phases allow progress, monitoring and adjustment of interventions.

INTERVENTIONS: STRATEGIES

- Individual and family sessions
- Therapeutic and educational group interventions
- Educational and workshop activities
- Motivational interventions
- School reintegration and/or training placement
- Team supervision and training

GROUP WORK

The Group as a Space for Healing.

Care – Empowerment – Relational laboratory

Individual experience becomes an opportunity for collective learning and personal development.

- Learn to recognize themselves
- Engage in dialogue with others
- Make sense of personal experiences

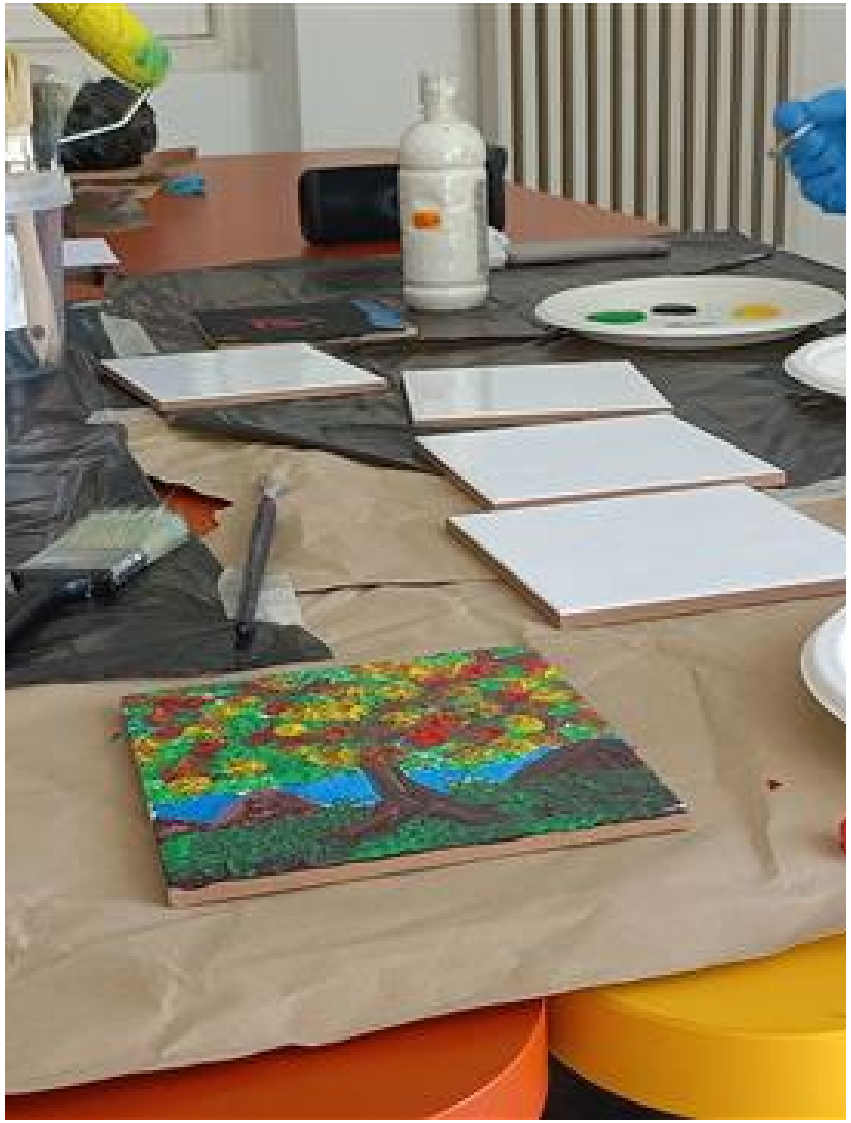
GROUP WORK: EXAMPLES

Therapeutic Group on Emotional and Relational Issues

Facilitated by a psychotherapist and an educator.

A reflective space addressing emotions, relationships, affective identity.

Objectives: enhance emotional intelligence; recognize affective needs; understand the fear of rejection and abandonment; explore dysfunctional relational patterns; develop healthier models of closeness and trust.



GROUP WORK: EXAMPLES

Educational Group on Substance Use and Relapse

Facilitated by educators. A structured discussion focused on analyzing personal experiences of substance use and relapse, within a context of respect and mutual exchange.

Objectives: understand the dynamics underlying substance use; identify relapse prevention strategies; strengthen the ability to seek support

CRITICAL ISSUES

- Management of Daily Life
- Staff turnover and stress
- Limited resources
- Collaboration with local referring services
- Complex reintegration paths

KEY STRENGHTS

- Multidisciplinary team
- Educational and relational approach
- Containment and acceptance
- Tailored projects
- Community life as a learning space
- Network collaboration

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