

# Poetotherapy: theory and practice

Mazza, N. (2017) Poetotherapy: theory and practice

Reviewed by Jan Ivoš Vinkler

The author is a professor at the Florida State University where he established the programme of specialized studies for art and community practice. He also works as a psychologist in clinical social work and in marriage and family counselling. He is also known as a poet and publicist.

He is an editor and also a charter member of *Journal of Poetry Therapy: Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, he publishes in *Journal of Family Social Work*, *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *Social Work* and also in *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*.

Mazza introduces this book which is a groundbreaking piece of work not only in psychology but also in special pedagogy, in therapy and also in social work. At the beginning of the second edition a reader is lured by the mention of RES model which is applied in many age groups, clients of different backgrounds and those with various problems.

The book is divided into four main parts, each part is divided into several chapters. The first part includes an introductory issue of the basics of poetotherapy. In the first part we learn about its historical aspects. Mazza uses comprehensible, technical language, though the reader should be able to get basic information about psychology, psychotherapy, sociology, special pedagogy and medicine. If a reader of this book does not understand at least one of above-mentioned scientific disciplines, he will be either slightly disorientated or disappointed or he will check every other sentence and look for definitions and names on the internet.

The second chapter depicts theoretical basics introduces the field of psychology and psychotherapy. Particular psychotherapeutic specializations enable us to view poetotherapy. Names such as Adler, Jung, Freud or Perls are also introduced in this chapter.

RES model is a part of the name of the third chapter which brings us to the most important matter of this book. It is a way of working with poetry which was invented by the author. **RES** is an abbreviation of initial letters of words that show us all the things this model works with. **R**eceptive part of the model includes the use of literature in practice -working with existing literature. **E**xpressive part is characterized by the process of writing of texts by a client. The last **S**ymbolical part is created by rituals, metaphors and reading out to others.

The second part of the book is focused on working with clients – individuals, family, group and community. The author introduces illustrative studies in all four mentioned groups. Mazza shows a way of working, gives examples of clients' poetic texts that were created during therapeutic sessions. It is possible to say he enables us to "keep an eye on him" during his work so that we can get the picture of the methodology he uses.

The third part is called "development phases" and it is focused on the description of possible difficulties and risks in children and early adolescents, adolescents, young adults, adults, older adults and it also deals with the topic of a loss and death. In this part of publication Mazza again in detail describes not only his way of working but also his colleagues' way of working. Doing this and using examples and studies he enables a reader to get a grasp of working with individuals in mentioned development phases.

In the fourth part of the book we learn about the research realized by e-mail questionnaires with quite exceptional number of 240 respondents from English speaking countries all around the world. The research shows that poetry ranks among three most commonly used modalities together with music, diary writing and working with a story in artetherapeutic work with individuals or groups. These 240 respondents underwent quite strict selection procedure. All of them are professionals who can be counted as workers using principles of psychotherapy. Issues such as education, competence and supervision necessary for doing poetotherapeutic practice are embodied in this part of the book.

This fourth and also the last passage of the publication includes also appendices that I consider to be one of the most important and the most highly-valued part of the book. Here we can find enrollment forms, tables, described practical methods, in short everything that is missing in other publications dealing with these topics. In the appendices there are also full texts of used poems written during therapeutic sessions or poems by respected authors.

The author refers to studies, authors from foreign countries, case studies which are stated as an example to illustrate the situation and-consequently-to connect theory and practice in accordance with the name of the book. I personally consider this book as a crucial and well-written guide not only for beginning poetotherapists but also for experienced ones.

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