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## **Some mechanisms of psychotherapeutic effects in bibliotherapy**

### **Abstract**

Some mechanisms of bibliotherapy that cause the reader's personal change are considered in article. Vygotsky's research in connection with the psychology of art, that became one of the basic in the analysis of functioning of method, are also outlined.

### **Keywords**

bibliotherapy, basic therapeutic mechanisms, reader, book

The therapeutic mechanisms causing personality changes in the reader were a subject of Vygotsky's research in connection with the psychology of art, and, as a consequence, they became basic in the analysis of functioning in bibliotherapy method.

Bibliotherapy is an important clinical tool used in the professional practice in order to optimize the process of individual personal development, as well as in the course of psychotherapy in various dysfunctional states (depression, phobias, dependencies, etc.).

The term bibliotherapy (from the Greek words "biblion" book and "therapeia" treatment) was first used by Samuel McChord Crothers (1916), implying the use of literary works for the treatment of mental illness. Later, in 1961, the definition of this concept was adopted by the Association of American Libraries (ALA). It included not only a reference to the use of the method for psychotherapeutic purposes, but also placed emphasis on the aspect of solving personal problems through directed reading. The history of method development counts for more than one millennium, but the rapid development and the actual study was gained only in the XX century, when it began to develop such areas as therapeutic dialogue, discussion of the perception of the literary text under the guidance of a trained professional as well as providing patients with specially selected literary works and the emergence of the self-help books genre.

The researchers propose to allocate a number of subtypes of bibliotherapy in accordance with the object and goals of its work. Starting from the method of influence on the reader and the presence of subsequent group work with the literary works, reactive bibliotherapy and interactive bibliotherapy are pointed out. In the first of these sub-

types the therapeutic changes are provided through reading as it is, while in the second one the emphasis shifts towards targeted discussions based on the material read by the subject.

An important question ever arisen before the bibliotherapy researchers is the question of the mechanisms that cause the reader's personal change. Vygotsky, considering the formation of an emotional response to a literary text in his "Psychology of Art", writes: "Emotions of art are clever emotions. Rather than appear in the making fists and trembling, they settle mainly in fantasy images. (...) All the artwork – a fable, short story, a tragedy – contains necessarily affective contradiction, causing mutually opposite rows of feelings and, thus, causes them to destruct. This can be called the true effect of a work of art, and we, thus, come quite close to the concept of catharsis ... ..".

A little later, in the 50s of the XX century, it was Shrodes (1951) who first described the basic mechanisms – identification, projection, introjection, catharsis and insight – making it possible to implement the psychotherapeutic effect of bibliotherapy. As a basis for the consideration she took the same processes, which were described by Vygotsky, specifying and marking them in terms of psychodynamic paradigm. After Shrodes this view on bibliotherapy was held by such researchers as Zaccaria (1968), Afolayan (1992), Bernstein (1989), Farkas and Yorker (1993), Kramer and Smith (1998), Morawski (1997), Pardeck (1998). The researchers argue that the reader under the influence of fiction literature for the first time experiences the psychological processes of identification and projection in the moment when he/she shares his/her problem and its circumstances with the character of the book. In turn, abreaction and catharsis take place when the reader gets acquainted with the way the character of the book solves the difficulties. That is, the inner work of complex feelings carried out by the reader, at the stage of exploring the literary work can be quite invisible to an outside observer, however it goes and prepares him/her for the most important stages of the bibliotherapeutic process – the emergence of catharsis and insight.

On this occasion, Vygotsky wrote: "... no other term used until now in psychology expresses with such completeness and clarity the central fact for aesthetic response that painful and unpleasant affects are exposed to destruction and transformation into the opposite, and that aesthetic response as such essentially boils down to ... catharsis, that is, to the complex transformation of feelings. (...) from fable and to tragedy the law of aesthetic response is one and the same: it embodies the passion, developing in two opposite directions, which in its final point, as if in a short circuit, finds its destruction".

Indeed, catharsis allows the reader experience an affective discharge, get the experience of living on the other modality of emotions within a situation that has caused difficulties in real life. Insight arises at the moment when the reader is able to realize a new mode of action which can be applied in practice and internalize the solution described in the book.

Bibliotherapy enables recognition process that takes place when the reader identifies with the character of the book or sees the similarity of their situation to the situation in which the characters occur. The experience of self-discovery through Bibliotherapeutic reading may be outstanding, or ordinary, much of the process is determined by the patient or a participant who control the degree of their identification with the content of the text (Lawrence I. Silverberg, 2003). Personal insight about the problematic situation may occur with varying frequency and speed; everything depends on the personality traits and other characteristics of the reader.

## **References**

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