



WHO CC for Research and Training in Mental Health Trieste - Azienda Sanitaria Universitaria Integrata di Trieste

FRANCA AND FRANCO BASAGLIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL - THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM

**The right** [and opportunity]  
**to have a** [whole]  
**life**

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL & CONFERENCE  
**Trieste,**  
**15-18 November 2017**

Best practices for empowerment, self determination, community resilience, wellbeing and human rights  
[www.triestementalhealth.org](http://www.triestementalhealth.org)

### ABSTRACT FORM

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Title of the contribution/Titolo del contributo	Gender approach in community (... and mental health services)		
Objectives/Obiettivi	Highlight gender difference in (mental) health		

#### Contents-text/Contenuto-testo:

In 1990's started in Trieste the pioneristic experience of "Centro Donna Salute Mentale", the first (in the world) Community Mental Health Center, open 12/24h, just for women with mental suffer, strongly influenced by Franca Ongaro Basaglia's thought and practice ("*Health and Illness*", 1982).

The staff consisted only of women operators and the major goal of this experience was building strong relationship with associations and group of women, with or without mental suffer, inside the community.

From that years, like a carsic river, that flows sometime on and sometime beneath the surface, a group of women operators still carry on gender difference perspective, building active and effective connections with socio sanitary services, association (Stella Polare, Goap...), cooperative (Cassiopea...) and citizens. The association "Luna e l'altra", born in that years, is still the main partner in our projects for women.

The theory that guide our practice is that women need specific hearing, without stereotypes and prejudices, and that is necessary pay great attention on the risk of psychiatrization (or psychologization...) of women expressions and features. Moreover, we believe in the need and the benefit of mutual recognition, especially when women have the possibility to (re-) build their own history on positive identities and not on illness.

So, in a world where significant differences still exist (as WHO repeats...) we don't propose separated services, but strongly highlight that different needs require different answers, even to fight the new risk of istituzionalization for women (i.e. the actual answers are too often over psychopharmacologization and the offer of the mere technicism clinical of individual outpatient therapy).

Actually, the operative group, an open group that involved in periodic meeting all the professionalisms (social and sanitary) as well as women "with experience", associations, cooperatives and member of community, deal with many activities, both inside and outside mental health department:

- continuously sensitize operators in every mental health center to gender differences and diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitative offers, often organizing therapeutic or self help women group;
- encourage different occasions of socialization, as culturally relevant as possible (with famous host!), and activities concerning an healthy lifestyle;
- provide assistance, with the final purpose of emancipation, in recovery path, even through the managing of two apartments in the city ("Una casa tutta per noi") with many spaces where cooking, reading, and meeting together and the strict collaboration with association Luna e l'altra;
- focus on improving women's attitude and skills...and "specific crisis management";
- promote different activities: co-planning of weekly activities (courses of painting, photo, picture, gardening, reading, tailoring, cooking, gymnastic, yoga, natural remedies...) and "special appointments" (parties, excursions, trips, holidays);
- actively find formative course and work opportunities for women;
- build combined project with general and maternal – pediatric hospital and community services, even in order to prevent women's suffer;
- work together the services against domestic and intimate partner violence;
- collaborate with services for migrant women and trade's victim;
- organize event and congress, training and continuing updating, from WHO guide lines to local projects and opportunities;
- encourage debates and occasion of meeting between women "expert" on different topics (i.e. old issues...still actual: domestic violence, gender bias, peculiarities of different moments of women sexual life, the issue of woman body, gender difference in psychopharmacology, work opportunities, risk and protective factors...), open to women who use our Services. These are often "unusual meeting", with a strong "feminine mark" and artistical representation...

So, this workshop is one of this appointment, as usual a "choral" experience, in which we continue to grow up women's network, and try to use new word, and to put different sense in word we use...

#### Bibliography:

World Economic Forum (2015), Global Gender Gap, Report;

World Health Organization (2009), Addressing gender inequities in health and environment,

World Health Organization (2011), Improving Equity in Health by Addressing Social Determinants