

## **Mission Statement of Adventure Therapy**

During the last years Adventure Therapy has evolved into an independent approach in Germany and in other countries. Considering the recent changes and processes the task group „Erlebnistherapie“ of the *Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V.* has written this mission statement. It provides orientation and outlines a common foundation for Adventure Therapy. Therefore, we addressed explicitly different working fields, professions and legal backgrounds (social security code).

### **What is Adventure Therapy?**

Adventure Therapy can be understood as an allied health profession, which can be added to other therapeutic approaches in different settings. It is an experiential holistic approach, which supports or creates therapeutic settings through experiential and nature based methods. The therapeutic expertise of the practitioner, the therapeutic context and the depth of process distinguish this approach from pedagogical interventions. Adventure Therapy is goal oriented. The Adventure Therapist gears his/her practice to the disorder or dysfunctional behavior of the client<sup>1</sup> and aims at building and encouraging new behavioral patterns, resources, strengths and functional behavior. This process focuses on the needs of the clients.

### **Goals and therapeutic quality**

The goal of Adventure Therapy is to foster a process of self-healing and personal growth. This happens through providing external experiential fields that match the internal goals and change process of the client. In nature or in designed situations, clients can experience themselves in action. These experiences can become meaningful to the client through a conscious reflection of the internal process, that happened during the activity. The therapeutic quality becomes clear through anamnesis and diagnosis, which are important prerequisites for therapeutic interventions in connection with a possibly necessary referral context. The therapeutic process needs to be based on a personal motivation or psychological strain and/ or a disorder based on a recognized classification system. Adventure Therapy interventions are tailored to the individual goals of the client. They are individually challenging, address the intrinsic motivation of the client and are always embedded in the overall context. This context determines the specific goals of the intervention.

Professional documentation is a mandatory part of quality management.

### **Principles**

Our principles of Adventure Therapy are fundamentally based on the understanding of human nature of the *Bundesverbandes Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V.*, which sees people as “[...] a social and individual being, whose life concept has to be respected. Support should always be designed individually and aims in particular at improving social

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<sup>1</sup> We generally use the term „client“ in this working field, because it supports a positive view of the person.

relationships. Every person is recognized and taken seriously in their distinctive personality and sociobiographical uniqueness. This includes the right to ownership, self-determination and the opportunity to use this at any time; the rights of others remain unaffected.“  
(Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V., 2018c, p.1)

Experiential therapists consider people as a unity of body, soul and mind (expanded biopsychosocial model) who are embedded in a social and ecological environment.

The professional identity and principles of Adventure Therapists are characterized by:

- the understanding of a life-affirming, active, self-healing power of humans (action and solution orientation).
- the multidimensional perception of humans as an expanded biopsychosocial unity.
- the resource-oriented perspective on people, their personality, the system and their environment as well as their trust and security potentials and
- the willingness for lifelong, personal and professional reflection and further development.

Adventure Therapists work in a process-oriented manner, in terms of stabilization, confrontation and lasting integration. This includes clarifying, stimulating and accompanying individual development processes.

They design experiential therapeutic situations in nature or in artificial settings, which address the clients holistically. Key therapeutic potentials are determined by resource orientation and self-organization of the clients. In order to tap the therapeutic potential, Adventure Therapists take a present and attentive but reserved position. They offer clients a trusting, safe and helpful relationship, which is subject to confidentiality.

### **Qualification and competency**

Adventure Therapy primarily uses hard, soft and meta skills of experiential education, on the basis of a therapeutic understanding, professional process design, self-reflection and authentic self-awareness. This is based on a trained perception and profound knowledge of nature, experience-based learning and interrelationships.

Access to the professional field exist via a sound experiential education training (job profile of experiential educator and title of Erlebnispädagoge be®) in connection with therapeutic expertise (qualification or corresponding professional experience) or via a therapeutic education in connection with experiential education qualifications (see Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V, 2018a : p.7f .; Bundesverband Individual- und Erlebnispädagogik e.V, 2018b, p. 2).

Based on the German Qualifications Framework (DQR) we specify exemplary individual competencies and abilities of Adventure Therapists (see AK DQR, 2011, p. 6f.):

#### *Knowledge*

- Dynamics and effects of experiential education activities
- Client-centered thinking
- Psychological Disorders
- Methods of crisis intervention
- Natural space as a therapy medium and outdoor skills

### *Abilities*

- Self-reflection and reflection of others
- Professional understanding of one's role
- Dealing with resistance, limits as well as power and helplessness
- Assessment competency
- Clarification of goals (goal, duration, frequency)
- Conversational skills for individual and group settings
- Working with multi-professional teams
- Participatory skills
- Resource orientation

### *Social skills and autonomy*

- Empathy
- Adaptability
- Intimacy and distance

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