Development project: stress-reducing therapies for women in women’s shelters
And who am I by the way?

- Eleonora Bru

  - Head of **One Planet** – NGO for improvement of environment and health, based in Stockholm, Sweden. Project focus, on national and international level.
  
  - CEO and founder of business **Scandinavian Wellness**
    - Environmental consultant from quantification of CO2e to building up of Environment leading systems for small-, medium and- big organizations.
    - Medical qigong instructor and deep relaxation guide
    - Deep muscular massage therapist (sports massage) and pathology advisor

  - Teacher at **Södertörn university** (in Stockholm) in
    - Environment management system with expertise in implementation of Environmental law.

  - Continuous **student**!

  - **Previous experience** of relaxation treatments:
    - Groups of women in shelter house, Stockholm.
    - Stressed out academics from all sorts of scientific fields.
    - Groups of people with long time psychological issues (anxiety-, PTSD-, Borderline-, Manic depression-, neurosis- and more) on a medical level.

  - **Background** (I know, I’m a “Jack of all trades!” ;)
    - Working with war damaged children in Mozambique
    - Writing in cultural magazines, poet, translator
    - Student (BA Theoretical philosophy)

  - **Love** Planet Tellus! 😊
Todays workshop

1. Short introduction to stress reducing practice medical (zhineng) qigong

2. Presentation of the project idea

3. Discussion!
”I want to live like if I had a normal life …”

Background inspiration: the women at the shelterhouse in Stockholm (Sweden).

• Making stress reducing body and mind therapy in the shelter house.
• Bodily practice, kindness toward my body.
• Meetings with memories coming to the present, processing past and present state.
• Feeling of normality and calm.
Recent research

Studies have shown that women who have suffered from intimate partner violence, have shown symptoms of ...

**Loss of the sense of self** giving psychiatric symptoms, for example:
- depression
- anxiety
- sleep disruption
- reliving the traumatic event
- hyperarousal
- avoiding reminders of the trauma
- difficulty in trusting others
- shame and guilt issues
- suicide attempts

Above can be experienced by survivors of trauma for a brief period of time while other survivors develop a common disorder amongst trauma survivors, a chronic PTSD.

*(A Systematic Review of Trauma-Focused Interventions for Domestic Violence Survivors, Carole Warshaw, Cris M. Sullivan, Echo A. Rivera, National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health and Michigan State University, 2013)*

**Therapies during stressful times (ongoing trauma)**

CBT usually treated with great results for persons surviving trauma but not with great result for women still closely linked to a violent relationship, an ongoing trauma.

*(D.M. Johnson, et al., 2011)*

**Body oriented therapies**

Body-oriented therapies to promote healing is not usually followed up scientifically but exist in a variety, for example:
- acupuncture
- yogic breathing
- mindfulness based stress reduction

One study where women give testimony about experienced abuse using yogic breathing techniques to alleviate depression in combined testimony/breathing program demonstrated significant pre-post reductions in their depression scores.

*(Franzblau et al, 2008)*
Brain-Body friendship

Why bodily stress release therapies?

Helping the brain out a little bit in ongoing trauma
- Calmness as a help in decreasing PTSD symptoms

Kindness and therefore appreciation of my body
- Understanding by doing, physical feeling of softness instead of beating.

Calmness as key to memory-processing
- Meeting with past and present memories and situations in a calm and safe environment.
- Meeting in a safe environment of people sharing similar experiences.
Lack of resources – richness in treatments

Project aim: linking the gap between lack of resources and possibility to activate treatments, by a project which:

• Makes people with different expertise and experiences – shelter house staff, therapists and women living in shelter houses – meet and share knowledge.
• Exchanging of already existing body therapy knowledge and creation of new therapies.
• Mapping of the today's needs asked for by women in shelter houses.
Possibility for increased calm during tumultuous times

Goal of the project, to support the up-start of:

• Possibilities to have at least one sort of stress-reduce body therapy as activity for women in each shelter house involved in the project.
• Mapping the frequency of anxiety-, PTSD- sleep disorders and depressions amongst women in shelter houses.
• Getting better understanding of the exact interests of activities asked for by women living in shelter houses.
• Creation of cooperative network of shelter houses in Europe.
DISCUSSION

• Interests in this type of project?
• Body therapies right now present in shelter houses?
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