

Four walls of water

SAILING SHIP ' DE TUKKER'

INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago the idea came up to provide young persons with multiple, complex problems with new opportunities by jointly restoring a one-hundred year old sailing ship, going out to sail and by letting them experience all the possibilities and impossibilities of sailing on a turbulent sea, as well as the struggle with themselves.

The vision of De Tukker is: 'De Tukker explicitly provokes young persons and it gives them the opportunity to make important life choices. If the youngster picks up this challenge, there is an optimal chance that the youngster does not revert to their former, often criminal behaviour'.

The emphasis is especially on the healthy part of the young persons: what can be developed? The attention is aimed at the here and now and the future of the youngsters. Developing of possibilities and realizing (or learning to realize) wishes and objectives are at the centre, instead of solving problems.

The focus is also on changing the behaviour of these youngsters. The youngsters learn to assume responsibility for their actions: what do you want and how can you make sure that you actually do that. 'Agree about what you will do and do what you have agreed'. The supervisors work closely together with the parents and with the counselling bodies.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TARGET GROUP

It concerns young persons from 15 to 23 years old who have multiple, complex problems. In many cases they have become stuck in other assistance processes or this is imminent.

They are often youngsters who are going through a crisis and/or have a disturbed self-image, and who do not have an understanding of their own behaviour and the consequences of their actions. They are 'boundless' in their behaviour, their understanding of values and standards has been insufficiently developed and they have a strong need for role models.

The group can be roughly distinguished into:

youngsters with strong externalizing behaviour (very rebellious, very angry, they can act but they use their positive qualities in a negative way); De Tukker brings them down to earth again.

the followers ('the grey mice'); on board they learn to recognize their true qualities and to break through them. De Tukker lifts them up and allows them to come into the picture.

PROGRAMME

This means – a sailing ship – is very specific, the structures and limitations are not only clearer than in ordinary society, but they are also inescapable. *Four walls of water!* The rules and everyone's safety are very closely connected!

The limitations of a ship, such as the room and being round the same people all the time, work confronting: you cannot avoid one another and you need one another; the stimuli from the environment surrounding the youngsters are strong and lead to reactions; you can hardly withdraw from the situation. The mutual relations are strongly measured. The continuous presence of the crew and their expertise (an obvious hierarchy) offer an experience of safety, dependence and reliability on people, which is something that most youngsters are not used to.

Disengaged trainees

How can we deal with disengaged trainees?

1. You always have a choice – Stephan Covey

We sailors know that 'You cannot change the direction of the wind, but you can change the way you trim your sails'. Are you a victim of your circumstances? Are you in charge of your own life? What can I change? What do I have to accept? And how do I discover the difference between those two?

In words and in the way we (the crew) deal with life we try to inspire our trainees to be aware of the fact that 'not the circumstances, not the situation, but your reaction towards this circumstances', determine your future. You always have a choice you can make. As crewmembers we use to say: '*The weather is always correct!*' That means that if there is a calm we will try to make use of it. If there's a storm, we try to make use of the storm to learn how to deal with stormy situations. Do we experience that the wind is against us or is it by the same wind that we are able to sail windward?

During the intake we already try to make the youngsters aware of the fact that they have a choice. For some of them it means a choice between prison and a voyage on a sailing ship. If they persist in saying: 'So I have to go on The Tukker', we won't take them.

On board you have the choice: 'Do I take this trip as a victim of other peoples choices or 'do I take the helm myself' and am I going to use my influence to make this voyage a successful, pleasant and learningfull event?

You may know the world famous 'Pike Place FISH-market' in Seattle. Even if it's not the job you prefer, every morning when you wake up you have a choice. You can rather choose to make it a great day, with joy and fulfilment or to walk around having a bad mood.

2. Begin with the end in mind – Stephan Covey

We say that the time, the energy, the space on board is not just a possession of the crew, but it's something we all share and it's something that needs the care of a collective responsibility. Off course there are different roles, the captain is the boss, but he or she can't do it alone.

Most youngsters are awfully stewed with the good intentions of people who tried to help them solving their problems. Most of them feel that they are reduced to their problems or to what they do wrong. Especially youthcare workers are good in that. They actually do the final part of the job most parents started.

It may even be worse when there are people who try to change you into a good person and thereby implicating that you are a wrong human being.

We choose another approach. We believe that you are good as you are. You're not a mistake of God. You may need some guidance to manage your dreams, talents and bad habits a little better. And we honestly admit that we also desperately need the right guidance during so many moments in our lives. We invite the trainees on a journey that can help them to discover their deeper dreams and to develop the talents they need to realise that dreams

That's why we ask every individual to make up their personal mission-statement. What will make you feel proud at the end of the journey? What wishes do you have? What do you like to develop during the journey? Any dream, any wish, any goal is OK as long as it

doesn't conflict with our shared goal: A safe journey from which we learn as much as possible to live a valuable life.

We also ask them to make a drawing that represents their mission-statement. All crewmembers also make their own mission-statement and a drawing. We tell each other about our statements and drawings. We make sure that there is full attentions from everyone during the presentations. By doing this the trainees can experience that they have influence during the voyage. Than we invite them to use the mission-statement as their compass during the trip. If you stand in front of a choice ask yourself: "Which way will lead toward my goals I've written in my mission-statement."

Offcourse this also is a matter of confidence. 95 % of the mission-statements give synergy with our common-goal. Sometimes we start a dialogue with a trainee about their goals if we think they put the level too high or too low. Or if we think it conflicts with our common goal. During this exercise we learn the trainees to formulate their mission-statement in a SMART way.

3. The succes of the intervention depends on the inner state of the intervener- Joseph Jaworski.

My passion for sailing didn't come from the skippers with the most knowledge or the most seamiles. I learned most from the skippers and teachers who were able to create an inspiring relationship with me. A relationship that enriched the both of us. Skippers that were able to make meaningful contact, who were as interested as they were interesting.

If you can speak the language of silence, you can hear what people say. Being in the not-knowing, allows the future to emerge (by presencing, not from the past).

For true contact with trainees there need to be a certain amount of silence, of not-knowing, of uncertainty, of openness. Every trainee is at any moment another unique chance to discover someone new. Observe your mental models, allow the diamond (that is in anybody) to emerge.

Good leadership gives as much space to a person as that person can take responsibility for.

No more, no less. If you give a trainee too much space, he or she will get drowned. If you give them not enough responsibility, they will get bored or annoyed. If people take less space, encourage them. If people take more space, be straight in drawing the line.

Leadership also gives the right stage to the valuable talents of the people you work with. Use it, or lose it. Use them, or lose them.

4. Four walls of water

We all share our passion for sailing, the blue ocean and we also have something with the social aspects of sailing. We love it to live and work together in a narrow space while there's always movement and there is always company. The ship is our vehicle to broaden our horizon and we experience a great sense of freedom.

And that is why we went to Nautical Collage and got our licences.

But one of our trainees once said that the ship is much more like a prison and he felt there were *Four Walls of Water*. Some of these trainees find themselves more

comfortable on the land during hikes in the mountains, or during rock climbing or a solo bivouac. Some don't have great social skills, but their individual skills can become evident during outdoor challenges. Many of our trainees have problems with authority or quiet fast get the feeling that someone is against them. Most of them aren't able to solve problems or conflicts in a proper way. Most of them come from family backgrounds where they weren't trained to live and work together in a positive and constructive way. Life on a sailing ship with so many people, so many interactions, so many demands, so many can be a tight, burdensome experience.

Even the warm comradeship we value so much while we meet the elements can be uncomfortable if you become aware of the lack of that same comradeship in times you needed it so much.

Then a long hike can be a great relief. There's no longer the huge dependence on the crew of the ship, you don't have to be alert all the time for ropes you don't understand, for names of sails you can't remember, for places that are dangerous. You just have to put one foot for the other, do your own thing, have your own thoughts.