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Agency and resilience behind the we-ness: A case study of a couple therapy for mental disorders

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Our presentation addresses the resilience phenomenon in the context of couple therapy and mental disorders. The presentation is based on our article, which is the first article of her ongoing dissertation research. We consider resilience as an ability to learn new through adversities, in distinction to generally known resource oriented approach in psychotherapy field. We introduce one therapy case, in which both spouses had severe mental disorders, and difficulties in managing their daily life with these disorders. They did not seek help for relationship problems, instead the relationship was their resource. One can say, that they had a strong sense of we-ness. In couple therapy research we-ness and we-stories have commonly been regarded as resilience. Still, we claim that the concept of we-ness does not reach the multidimensional nature of resilience. To capture this multidimensionality we have used Froma Walsh's family resilience framework as a theory. The data was derived from the Relational Mind research project (2013-2016) funded by the Academy of Finland. The project was conducted by the University of Jyväskylä in collaboration with four other universities in Europe. The data was gathered in a natural setting within couple therapy sessions conducted in the Psychotherapy Training and Research Centre in the University of Jyväskylä. In the presentation she will describe, how the strong we-ness prevented spouses to develop their more agentic and autonomic forms of resilience, and how quarrels in therapy led them to learn new ways to interact with each other and other people.

Biography

Jonna Karasmaa is a PhD student from the University of Jyväskylä. She works as a Psychologist with psychosis patients in the outpatient care of adult psychiatry.

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