

Annual Congress on Mental Health

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Zelfregiecentre: Please be Welcome!



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co-Presenters:

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Now a days, people with mental and/or social disabilities find it very hard to voice themselves and to have their opinions valued as equally important to people who don't have to face the same struggles in life as they do. Making it all together, it has become much harder for them to feel everyday normal life, which plays a decisive role in recovery, self-agency and self-efficiency. Zelfregiecentres in the Netherlands are an outstanding example of what happens if you invite people to leave any diagnosis at the door and apply a strengthened based approach in helping them. The idea of the Zelfregiecentres was born about 15 years ago. At that time Sonja Visser, the founder of the centres, was a member of the multidisciplinair treatment team at a mental hospital. In spite of all good intentions of every worker in that hospital, something felt horribly wrong. It seemed like perspectives of patients didn't matter anymore, not even to the patients themselves. As if they had nothing to contribute to the world because they were patients. Sonja started to dream of a place where people could come together and where everybody's opinion would equally matter. In co-production with peerworkers and likeminded people, she began her quest to develop her dream and make it work. Ten years after opening, the Zelfregiecentres are now a well known and advancing concept in the Netherlands situated on several locations. They have become a big influencing force at national and local levels. Every centre has its own *couleur locale* but they all have one thing in common: the very heart of each place is the 'ontmoetingsplaats'. An average of 80-100 visitors/day comes to those meeting places where they feel their perspectives matter. They matter, just as they are. The intent of our workshop is to create an atmosphere that resembles the character and sphere that can be found at our Zelfregiecentres. Key-words here are: open, warm, welcoming, equal, friendly, irrespective origin or social status. We believe that the visitors of the workshop will walk away with a pretty good idea of the concept of the Zelfregiecentre. And we hope that they will close it in their hearts as much as we did, by experiencing what it feels like.

Biography

Chris Peters, Erna Arnoldus and Niki Peters have a combined lived experience that expands decades. All three have a BcSW and have continued studying and contributing to educational programs for clients and professional workers. Together they have seen thousands of visiting clients. They have contributed at local and national level, advocating the use of professionalized peer-to-peer work and promoting anti-stigma in mental health.

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