

The Advantages of Including Tension Release Exercises ® in an Occupational Group Therapy Programme

Debra Smuts

Smuts D Occupational Therapists Inc, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa

Introduction: A testimony of experiences in using TRE in a occupational group therapy programme in an acute psychiatric hospital.

The method: TRE is an easy to learn, self-healing technique, developed by Dr David Berceci. The technique enables the body to activate its instinctive neurogenic tremor mechanism. The tremors elicited help to release built up tension in the body that accumulate from stressful or traumatic life events. This allows the body to regulate into a calm, balanced and safe state.

It is a body based technique to regulate the autonomic nervous system (flight/fight/freeze response).

Practice Implications: TRE is used successfully in more than 30 countries. Because of its low cost and the simplicity of the technique it is easy to present in groups (even large ones) and is very well suited for work in a community set-up.

Advantages:

1. The therapeutic relationship (allowing the therapeutic use of self); what is the poly-vagal theory
2. Assessments: how it can be used as assessment tool.
3. Carry-over to interpersonal groups: easy entry into psychosocial groups. We already establish many of the healing factors of groups during these sessions by adapting the exercises into group exercises.
4. TRE fits into various frameworks, eg. the Vona du Toit Model of Creative Ability
5. Vicarious trauma prevention

Conclusion: TRE can be used effectively with all age groups, cultures; with the physically and mentally handicapped as the focus is on wellness and independence, supporting the aims of the therapeutic process.