

Inner Structure, Outer Structure

In the last few weeks I have been thinking again and again about the seminar "Crisis Intervention" that was part of my training in Gestalt therapy. There I met a point of view that has been useful to me time and again until today: that of outer and inner structure.

By inner structure means those structures that are founded within the psychic, everything that gives us psychological and emotional support. For example confidence, basic trust, acceptance, self-care, spirituality. Outer structure means everything that lies outside of this sphere: A roof over your head, daily structure, social structures, reliable rules, your own body, a recurring wage.

The more the inner structure is impaired, the more important the outer structure becomes: that is why the first duty in crisis interventions is to establish structures. This includes a directive approach in these situations (because the people affected are usually no longer able to make decisions), clear agreements and tight planning. This is why, for example, day structures are so important when one is mentally stressed or ill. Or the activation of the social network.

The more the outer structure is affected, the more important the inner one becomes. Then the strength of the foundation on which we stand is tested. We are thrown back on ourselves and must rely on a hopefully stable inner structure. Basic trust, confidence, self-esteem, tension regulation, the feeling of self-efficacy then become important.

At the moment we are being tested in just this way: the outer structures are under a lot of strain: public life is paralysed, contacts are thinning out, structures of the world of work are partly lost. The inner structures on which we can rely are now in particular demand.

Therefore it is important to take care of those inner structures and to do things that are good for you. And yes, it's okay to enjoy the sunshine of a beautiful spring day over an espresso, even when many people are feeling bad. This is because it helps you to maintain your own functionality in the long term and thus gives you the chance to do good for others.

Incidentally, "social distancing" is a sensitive term in this context. One should rather talk about "physical distancing", because psychologically we should not distance ourselves from each other at all. We are social beings, and supporting relationships are the most effective protective factor in difficult times.

The importance of inner structures and social contacts is currently being violently demonstrated to us. And rightly so, as they *are* a great thing: always available, not destructible by any earthquake, extremely effective. It is quite possible that after the crisis, some of this will stick permanently in everyday working life. I believe it would be good for us socially and economically in equal measure.

Yet it is also true that external structures can be established relatively quickly. Internal structures, however, grow over years. By the time you need them, you should already have them. Working on yourself is a far-sighted investment. You should start as early as possible.

Here are two suggestions for reading in case you have more time to read at the moment: "Daring Greatly" (Brené Brown) [german](#) / [english](#). Brené Brown writes intelligently and scientifically sound about a topic that is culpably neglected in the field of leadership and relationship building: vulnerability. My own contribution: "Management and Love" (Tibor Koromzay) [german](#) / [english](#). Psychological and spiritual fundamentals on the human demands on managers that we will need in the future.

Take care of your structures – especially the inner ones. It helps, on and off the job.