



Permaculture applied in the recovery
process of people with mental illness



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CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

ORGANIZATION:	ŠENT
COUNTRY:	Slovenia
CASE STUDY NAME/ ID/TITLE	Ljubljana (Ježica)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (i.e. previous learning and challenges, situation...etc)

ŠENT is comprised of many programs, many of which are aimed at users regaining their autonomy, or put another way, aimed at psychosocial rehabilitation. One such program/group is the Ježica group, a residential group, which means that it is a house where people with mental health problems live autonomously, with weekly meetings from a mentor who helps them with their problems. Since this is non-institutional care, there are many problems that need to be taken care of, such as keeping clean, eating well, exercising, communicating well and other aspects of life. With little funding and mental illness, many residents find little reason to engage themselves. This is where PERMIND comes in.

REASONS FOR ATTENDING THE TRAINING

PERMIND was imposed on the group. They were told they were getting a garden, but they did not really want it. The training was carried out by the mentor and the trainer Mr. Črt Kovač. They emphasized that after the initial work, not much work was required and that they could grow whatever they wanted, with assistance from their mentor. That is when they became interested and motivated.

EXPECTATIONS BEFORE THE COURSE

They assumed the garden would imply a lot of work and they were especially worried about working in the sun. They did not see the reason for having a garden when it was so much simpler going to the store and buying vegetables. Since people keep moving in and out of the house, they also were concerned about their work eventually going to waste.

DID IT MEET HIS/HER EXPECTATIONS? WHY?

The initial work was mostly done by the trainer and the mentor, since it involved physical exercise. After that, however, the residents found that they liked being outside in the garden and working on the plants. Observing the soil and the wildlife, harvesting the vegetables...it quickly became a place where they liked to socialize and then they started making it their own. Each resident had some previous experience and they were very happy sharing it with the group. They naturally cultivate interpersonal relationships and made sure that the vegetables, flowers and everything else thrived. They did not have any positive expectations, so the garden was a complete surprise.



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OUTCOMES FROM THE TRAINING (OR CHANGES) IN THE PARTICIPANT'S LIFE (personal, familiar, etc.)

The changes were slow, but very impressive. With the garden, there came exercise and the residents felt better. With exercise came interest in eating well and they became interested in vegetables, then in cooking the products and finally in what everyone else was doing. The garden made the loose group at Ježica into a team, which improved their bonds and made them want to socialize.

While it is too soon for us to tell whether there are any significant long-term changes in the residents' mental health, permaculture definitely improved their lives beyond what we, or they, expected.

PARTICIPANT'S NEW PLANS FOR FUTURE TRIGGERED BY THE TRAINING

The participants want to continue their own gardens when they move out and they return for seed or their favorite plants. They come visit the garden and their friends. If you have ever worked with people with depression, you know how important that is.