



FORNET: Adapting Narrative Exposure Therapy for traumatized offenders

Narrative exposure therapy (NET) for forensic offender rehabilitation (FORNET) aims at reducing symptoms of traumatic stress and controlling readiness for aggressive behavior. It follows the logic of NET with special emphasis on violent acts in past and future behavior. In NET, the therapist guides the client by means of exposure through his traumatic experiences in chronological order linking the negative emotions to the past context and integrating the traumatic experiences into the autobiographical memory.

During FORNET, we also encourage verbalization of any positive emotions and experiences linked to past violent and aggressive behaviors. This recall of emotions (linked to the there and then) is contrasted with feelings that emerge during the narration process (here and now). In this way, the therapist helps the client to anchor the whole range of sensory and bodily experiences, cognitions, and emotions to the contextual cues. A number studies with veterans and violent youths have proven the feasibility of FORNET, found evidence of a positive outcome (recovered mental health, fewer offenses committed, less drug intake, and improved integration into civil society), and highlighted the importance of addressing the whole range of experiences while treating violent offenders.

In the master class, participants will theoretically and practically get a first impression of FORNET and the challenges in the work with traumatized offenders.

About the NET experts

Dr. Anselm Crombach was conferred a Doctor rerum naturalium (PhD in natural science) studying the impact of violent experiences on trauma-related disorders and aggressive behavior in former and current street children in Burundi. In the following years he has worked on assessing the consequences of civil war and military deployment in former combatants and active soldiers in Burundi. Currently he is working as a post-doc at the University of Konstanz, directing research activities in Burundi regarding interventions aiming to reduce aggressive behavior and trauma-related mental health symptoms. He and his Burundian colleagues are also evaluating the impact of a reintegration program for street children.

Dr. Tobias Hecker is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of Psychology at Bielefeld University, Germany. His research focuses on consequences and prevention of organized, community and family violence. He has published several research papers on organized, community and family violence, posttraumatic stress and child maltreatment and served as peer-reviewer for numerous scientific journals. He studied Psychology at Philipp's-University of Marburg, Germany and at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. He attained his Ph.D. at the University of Konstanz, Germany (supervised by Prof. Thomas Elbert) and worked as postdoctoral research fellow at the University of

Zurich, Switzerland. As an active member of the NGO vivo international Dr. Hecker facilitates the implementation of evidence-based intervention in countries with limited access to mental health care (e.g., Tanzania, Uganda, DR Congo).