

The Therapist

and

The Horse

-in compulsory treatment

Sven Forsling



A book in progress

The therapist and the horse

When I finished the English version of "The girl and the horse" I played with the concept, the horse as a co-therapist. Now that I resume my walks in horse country, I find myself increasingly looking to the mountain where the horse as a "co-therapist" dwells. Here the therapists' transference and counter transference to the horse become exciting and interesting. It appears with a shimmering therapeutic uniqueness, the therapist very often with a personal and powerful counter transference to his co-therapist. What does this mean in the therapeutic situation? Could this glow enhance performance or could it at times interfere with it?

Classic co-therapy is most prevalent in couples- and family therapy. The big advantage to this is that two can see more than one and that the therapy situation becomes more equal. Also the therapists' security with each other and their ways of jointly managing conflicts can serve as a model and an example for their clients.

Wandering the co-therapy mountains I choose my own paths, set my own agenda, seek my own answers. How does my own counter transference look like? How do I see the horse without obscuring the picture by seeing myself? One question I ask myself, and it is a question I have had with me for a long time; why did I wait for so long before I started Frossarbo stables? In the text ahead, I will refer to Frossarbo stables as Stall Frossarbo.

I had made a public presentation of an equine assisted therapy model in 1962 and it had been strongly approved by Richard Blum, then a professor at Berkeley. I tested the model to some extent at an institution in Stockholm in 1967 and it gave clear positive results. But it was not until 20 years later that I took the plunge with Stall Frossarbo. And it was not the horse-assisted therapy, I wanted to try out, it was the 24 hour therapy; and that I felt that the community run compulsory treatment programs for juveniles were becoming therapeutically impossible. And it was around Stall Frossarbo as a 24 hour therapy program that I put on weight-related

research. I also noticed that when I argued for a start of Stall Frossarbo I often became emotionally involved when I talked about the "horse bit", as if I was afraid someone would laugh at it and not take it seriously. It made me angry at myself and I remember at some of the final presentations I strongly emphasized that it would be fun, exciting and important to work with horses and youth. That Stall Frossarbo would not be less professional, just because we had fun. The fact remains, however through all the 12 years with Stall Frossarbo I was always overly sensitive to criticism of the stable. I've never been able to give myself an adequate answer as to why?

Now as I wonder around in co-therapy- mountains, thinking of my own feelings and my own shortcomings in relation to my colleague the horse, I suddenly realize that the pieces are falling into place. Each piece has been there before but it is now, in this new light, that they form a new and a personal pattern that says something. It becomes a story that wants to be told. Is it too personal? It is difficult for me to judge.

The deeply personal accommodates a paradox. As a group therapist, you'll experience it constantly. When a well hidden and locked up experience, feeling, thought releases itself you sit there alone and destitute in your tears. Then the paradox happens. Your deep personal experience is also that of others. Gunnar Ekelöf writes in a poem:

I live in another world, but you live in the same

Here is my story.

I was talking to my mother, a few months before her death, about my interest in horses. I said I sometimes wondered how I had become so interested in horses, since I was the only one among all my friends. Our family had no history of having had horses, and yet I was so interested. Then my mother said suddenly, "I know. Have I not told you? I can almost name the day when your interest for horses was born. First it was cars. You were three and a half years old. We rented the ground floor of a house in Storängen outside Stockholm. Due to the war cars run on produced gas by wood. You could stand for hours and wait on the corner of the garden and hope that

someone would come by. The year before, you had a stomach problem and you had been treated at Children's Hospital Samaritan, who was your fear. When you were on your first check up, it was three months before this incident, even though you were only three years old you understood what was going on, and you ran and screamed and behaved quite impossibly. You should know, you had a lot of running in your legs at that time. And there were all housewives behind their curtains thinking that the young Norwegian, she was not much of a mother, having no way of handling her son. It was embarrassing. Now it was time again for hopefully the last check up and I groaned. How would I get you into the car to take you to the hospital without a new show of disastrous behaviour? You know, Dad was drafted. I could not count on any help from him. I told you that we would go into town and buy a present for you, a nice wooden car. You jumped happily into the taxi. There were no scenes. After a week I could bring you back from the hospital. I had bought a car for you as I had promised. You said nothing. You just sat there in your room and looked at the car. You sat in silence for a long time. Suddenly you took the car and threw it with full force at the wall and then you ran out into the garden. I let you be. After a while I went out to fetch you. But you were nowhere. I was getting worried, and soon I became really worried. Then the phone rang and it was from Nyman's laundry. You sat in the stall with their old Ardennes. They still had him for delivering laundry. You sat at the back of the stall at the horse's foreleg. And you did not want to leave. You must have remembered the way up to the stables. When dad was home on leave, it happened that you two went up to the horse and said good night. You were allowed to give the horse a lump of sugar with your open palm. And now you sat there and did not want to leave. After that day, you never played with cars.

I recognized myself in my Frossarbo girls. Time and again they told me how they had defied the darkness of fear and cold nights and went up to the stable to their horses for comfort and closeness.

For me, the story does not end. It also has a following, which for me personally is very important.

When my mother told me about the trip to town to buy the car, this is a memory that I had come back to me many years earlier during my therapy training. I did not want to tell her, I did not want to make her sad. What I never told her was this:

As newly ordained psychologists and psychiatrists in Stockholm during the late sixties, we had to create our own training for psychotherapy skills. Stockholm County Council hired over a period of time, Walter Kempler, an American family therapist and Gestalt psychologist. We were a group of doctors and psychologists who were offered to be trained by him. He worked individualistic but used the large group dynamics. I came from the State run reform school system and even though my track record was just as good as anyone else, I felt as an outsider from an organisation that one of many regarded as backwards , I felt a need to show off.

At group seating I was active and I gave, in my opinion, intelligent interpretations regarding the works of my colleagues. I received many admiring assents and nods and I felt just fine. I rose in esteem. Then Kempler turned to the group and said: "It is remarkable how easily you let you be manipulated"

It was like a slap in the stomach. He was absolutely right. I was not at all interested in helping my colleagues in their work. I just wanted to show off. I stopped, became silent, and felt quite cold. The admiring glances disappeared. I did not protest, I said nothing. I just sat cold and empty. Others continued to work. I was in my lonely world. I just sat there. I had been in this world before. I recognized the empty, cold feeling.

Suddenly I was in first grade. It was December and in a few days there would be my birthday and I felt for the first time happy and not afraid at school. It had been a good day. I'm left-handed, but I had to write with the right hand and today the teacher had said that my letters did not look so bad anymore. It was the last hour and we would draw. The teacher said we should draw a factory. I felt free and full of energy and in a few seconds, I drew the finest factory, and I promise, it was the finest of all plants. I rushed up to the teacher and showed my masterpiece. She kept it up for the kids to see and they all said:

“Oooh, that’s goooood!”

I was jubilant. Then the teacher continued to hold up the drawing and the class fell silent. I saw how it glistened in the eyes of a little girl at one of the benches at the front. She began to suspect what I also began to suspect. A persist upholding did not mean “oooh that’s goooood!” It ment “oooh that’s baaaaaad!”

With my head down I went back to my seat. My drawing was ugly and sloppy. I sat there with the old degrading feeling. I was seized with a complete hopelessness.

I was three and a half years old. I walked in the garden of Storängen and I felt happy and excited. I would go into town and my mother would buy me a car! I ended up in hospital instead. I saw before me an ugly, crazy and crying kid who sat in a bed, bobbing back and forth. Two nurses stood in the doorway and watched with horror and disgust at the little kid. They waved to attract another sister. Now there were three who stood looking at him. The kid who sat there bobbing had only one thought in his head: "You can not stop bobbing, for when you do that you will you die".

Then I started to cry. It was tears lost since long. Now they came back. It was a painful, pent-up hulk. But the tears came back. I was seized with an infinite tenderness for this ugly, crazy little boy who sat there bobbing and fought for his life. This was the child in me that I had been ashamed of, felt disgusted of and which I had not wanted to acknowledge, the child that I had been afraid of. But it was a little fighter. I realised that I stroked my cheek.

It was a very strong feeling, a feeling of relief.

I often heard myself say through the years at Stall Frossarbo that it was important that the girls first came to know their own value and understand that they too were valuable, before they started their journey into their closed rooms.

It is important to understand that different forms of therapy can complement each other and cooperate.

Now that I can see my own childhood and early traumatic experience where the horse was my last attempt to stay alive, I

understand in a whole new way my own fragile sensitivity to the importance of Stall Frossarbo. That it would not be taken seriously. It was not just an intellectual idea that I presented. It was my own wounded child I showed. The benefit of a psychodynamic therapeutic processing, is that what was extremely dangerous and life threatening when you were a child, can be quite manageable when you are an adult.

If I would have had the opportunity to turn back the clock and restart Stall Frossarbo I would have a completely different way of grounding the research in my dear co-therapist's role.

May experience similar to mine be a help to others?

Co-therapy mountains is perhaps an area worthy of identification and description, both for its unique power and for its fragility.

A prerequisite for a good co-therapy is that therapists are complementary and that they are safe with each other. That is something you have to work on. It will not just be there because you are a trained therapist. This goes also for animal assisted therapy. The animals are not just objects. They interact with the therapist as a whole. This interaction has its own quality that may provide additional therapeutic power. In an ongoing conversation with my colleague and friend Matilda Ström she talks about several examples where her strong relationship with her trainee-dog also has contributed to openings in the therapeutic work.

The Therapist - The Horse - The Trust

Throughout therapy, cognitive as well as psycho-dynamic the trust between the therapist and the client is a cornerstone. It is from this trust that the therapeutic process gets its growing power.

I have in my professional life worked with young people in compulsory care, young people who have been betrayed over and over again, young people who do not dare to say yes, because another disappointment would make them too ill; young people caught in a 'no, no, no.

My first job as a psychologist was at The Lövsta Reform School, 60 miles south of Stockholm. This was in the mid-1960s. The total number of pupils was around 80, age range from 10 to 21 I call Lövsta a reform school and I will refer to all institutions within compulsory treatment of young people in Sweden as reform schools. In reality they have been renamed from time to time. They have been called juvenile schools, vocational schools, §12 institutions and homes for special supervision. State and municipalities seem happy to rename these institutions from time to time, as they appear to have the ability of developing bad connotations.

During my first years in the profession I learned at least two things. First it takes time to build a relationship, to get the confidence of a student. In the beginning, I could sometimes feel that I was great at creating contact, getting a student to open up and become personal. Then I realized that this impression was something that that special student gave to anyone he met and who could listen to him. *To fly to flower after flower, looking for nectar and never to find any.*

The second experience was to understand the concept of parallel process and the strong impact that could result in. In this chapter, I focus on building relationships. In the next one I

will turn to the phenomenon of parallel processes. Initially though, I will touch both.

It's really not difficult to understand why it takes time in compulsory treatment to create a sense of trust between pupils and staff. Pupils are in a very vulnerable position. This is society's last outpost before prison. A student has often been the subject of several community interventions, often accompanied with, "come on, take advantage of this chance, otherwise you will be sent to a reform school". And now the student is there. Completely alone at a place that has been a constant threat.

Where does he turn? What is most important for survival? It is not to the staff, it is to the other students. Who is king / queen, whom shall I lie down to, who is best to be friend with, who can I be superior to?

There are also clear parallels with the situation of staff. Staff like students was tied to Lövsta. It became an institution within the institution. The staff had their codes, their kings, their rankings, and their conflicts. To come, as a new staff member to Lövsta was to come to two institutions simultaneously, in both you had to survive. How you made it in one would influence how you are in the other.

The role of the psychologist met diverse expectations. "What can this snort do that we cannot? Now, we have a psychologist, now he'll have to solve the problems! "

I realized that I would have no chance to be an active part in any of these two institutions, if I did not manage to get some form of self-positioning. I had to create an intrinsic value that could get someone to want to listen to me. I tried in many ways. I took over the teaching of the three youngest boys, one afternoon a week. We did tours and outdoor living. One night a week I had an open house where staff were welcome for coffee and "talk" about problems at work. I called it "Drop in and talk out"

With the older guys, I played table tennis, football, handball and table tennis again. With the staff as a whole, I tried to talk with them as much as possible.

The two institutions existed beside each other with some clear dividing lines. Students were not allowed to address the staff by their first names. The name to use was the surname. The staff ruled of course over such as authorizing leaves and permitting isolations. It was a power however that was hierarchically structured. The formal power rested with the director of the institution and with his assistants and to some extent with the psychologist and the visiting psychiatrists. Those who had no power were the childcare workers. Those who were closest to the students were powerless.

In these two institutions, I came to meet students and staff that still managed to find living space to grow in. Many were crushed, however, and gave up. Many dreams to assist and do something good dried out, many students continued in their attempts, attempts that became just alone and cramped.

In the autumn of 1967 I got a job as a psychologist at a newly opened reform school for girls, Lövsättra. The home was run by the City of Stockholm and was situated near the Lake Ullna in Vallentuna. The number of pupils was 24, aged 14-16 years. The girls' problems were described as psychosocial. The students were living in four separate sections, villas, six students in each. The leading idea behind the institution can be expressed like this: Why would the city of Stockholm dispatch young people to juvenile reform schools, run by the state and spread throughout the country? Should not Stockholm with all its resources be able to offer a better alternative at home with opportunities to work with the students home situation? Sixteen years later, this idea was to be generally accepted. In January 1983 the new Swedish Social Services Act came in force. For eleven years municipalities and counties were to be responsible for the compulsory institutional care in Sweden. In 1994 that responsibility went back to the state.

At Lövsättra the horses entered the treatment arena. I was renting a stable next to the Institution. In the stables I had a mare that I raced, a broodmare with foal and a yearling. The stable in itself had nothing to do with the institution, it was my own. But it was here that I first came in a treatment situation as a psychologist with a horse and a student.

The girl was 14 years of age. She stayed mostly behind a thick wavy hair, which hid half her face. What she most wanted was to not go to school, and not to be at Lövsättra. Her speech was milling in a mixture with silence. We got nowhere. Then we tried a contract. Let us call the girl Anna. Anna would help me in the stables in the morning before school, would accompany me on the days I went to Solvalla for race training and even help me for a while after school. In return, Anna would go to school. Anna accepted. She sat her time at school and she came to the stables. We did not speak much. I showed her how I took care of the horses, what was important to think about, how to harness, how to make a young horse to not be afraid to harness and bridles, how to rinse hooves etc., in other words, all the everyday tasks that occur within a stable. There were not many words spoken, but Anna did what I asked her to do. Mostly we worked in silence. I was not in any hurry. I knew that to build a relationship takes time and this could take time and would take time. After one and a half, or maybe it was two weeks I came home to Lövsättra quite late one evening. I saw that there was something going on at one of the villas. People had gathered and I thought I heard the tinkling of glass. I drove by and saw my stable girl standing there swinging a bicycle chain around her. She stood outside the villa. A few windows were smashed and the other girls and staff stood frozen on the slope down to the villa. I jumped out of the car. Someone shouted that they had called the police. I ran up against Anna and I heard myself shouting something like "Are you crazy. What the hell are you doing?" My voice was shrill and angry. I came up to her. She began to shake, dropped the bike chain and I could hold her. She said nothing. Her tears came unevenly. We called the police off. We went with Anna to a psychiatric emergency unit.

On the morning meeting the next day I received a lot of good comments. It was nice having an adult who could set clear limits and who dared to stand for them. "Our young people need boundaries." I received the praise and everything should have been fine. But it was not. It was something that sat there and gnawed. I had seen something that the others had not seen, something that puzzled me, but I kept it to myself. I had seen Anna's eyes when she first saw me coming. There was a look of relief. "Where have you been? What took you so long?"

” Then she saw my anger and heard my hard voice. Her eyes had broken and had become empty and lack of meaning. I often came back to this in my thoughts. Could it be that I had already created a base of trust between Anna and me? Maybe I could just quietly have gone up to her, took off her bicycle chain and then held her? But was this possible? Here was a girl with sharp thorns, obstinate and frightened of contact. Would she, after barely two weeks be willing to risk a 'yes' in the relation to me? I found it hard to believe. Perhaps, however?

During the 70s, I worked at the reform school Bärby, outside of Uppsala. The students were criminal's boys 16-21 years of age, many with drug problems. During the first three years at Bärby, I had a pure research position. My work is reported in Treatment studies at Bärby 1971-1973, National Board report 7, 1974. When I started my job at Bärby, my wife and I bought a farmhouse in Stalbo, 30 miles northwest of Uppsala, where we had our horses. Over the years, several students came to follow me home, overnight or weekends to let loose of some of the institution pressure and get some breathing space.

One such student was Hasse. We will call him so. He was big and thick and he had difficulties in reading the world. He annoyed the other boys, got into constant fights and did not often understand why. He ran away often. His language was meager. He became something of a maverick. Few of the staff had the stamina to spend time with him. One day I was asked by the staff of the closed section where Hasse was kept, if I could bring Hasse home with me for the night to give him and themselves a little breathing space. It was becoming too much of Hasse. No one seemed to manage him anymore. "He is not feeling good"

I had not had much to do with Hasse. He took part, like all the other boys, in an experiment we conducted at the school that we called "The normalization of student wages". I had exchanged a few words with him in connection with data retrieval. That was all.

Hasse came home with me that night. Early the following morning, before going back to Bärby, we went to the stable to harness our four year old, a large black stallion. "That was a

big fucking fucker” Hasse said. "You could brush him if you like” I said. “You do like this”. Hasse brushed the horse a little bit backwards and at a distance but very concentrated. " Now we put on the harness "I said. "Fuck” Hasse said, “some more fuck here” and he went on. We had a very well brushed horse when we started our drive. I was driving, Hasse stuck to a rope in the wagon, and he was a bit half leaning backwards with squinting eyes. It was a beautiful spring morning. It was April, the sun had just gone up. Hasse's comments during the tour were: Fuck Forsling, fuck!

A few days later Hasse ended up in a completely frozen conflict at his unit. He had pulled a knife. "I will kill every fucking bastard" he shouted. I was called and ran over to the unit. Hasse stood against a wall, great and powerful, hair on end, red in face with a knife in one hand and a chair in the other. I stood still. We looked at each other. He met my gaze. I remember thinking that this is probably the first time that Hasse looks at me. Earlier, his eyes were either above or on the side of me, never straight on. I said a quiet hello and walked toward him. He shrank back first and then forward as if he would go for me. Then he just gave me the knife, sat down on the chair and said with a sigh, "fuck Forsling, fuck”.

I have sometimes in lectures come back to this episode. It has been to illustrate that the same word can mean different things and that a word's meaning is coloured by its context, and that even meagre words can describe great and genuine feelings and can have strong emotional charges.

In the Co-therapy- mountains this story gets a different meaning. It is not about language, it is about trust.

I see you and you see me, and I think you do not want to hurt me.

The trust was also to a big fucking fucker, a four-year old black horse.

Two days later, Hasse went on trial for crimes he had committed in connection with some of his runaways. Hasse was sentenced to prison. We lost touch. What happened to him I do not know.

It was the first year at Stall Frossarbo. It was lunch. Housing staff thought I had said 'yes' where I should have said 'no' to one of the girls. "She messes with you. You are far too credulous ". I lost my temper. I can blame it on too much to do. At lunchtime it was not just eating I had to deal with matters from the head office and there were calls to be answered. I scolded the girl and said something about how incredibly disappointed I was with her ended by saying: "now, you go up to the stable. We will sort this out when I have made my calls. The girl was dripping off. "Good," said my colleagues, "but you do understand that now she will disappear". "If she does" I said "I am going after her, no one else ". I rang my calls. When I came back to the stable the girl was waiting for me. She was crying. "I have not messed around," she said.

I think it was the last time I lost my temper. That does not mean that it was the last time I was angry or sad, but it was the last time that I lost my temper.

Several years later, we were on our way home on our annual trip abroad. We had been in Italy and we had visited our "godfather" Sören Nordin. We approached the border to Germany. We had taken a break. I came to sit beside a girl who would soon finish her first two-month course. I asked her if she had decided to say yes to the next two-month course at Frossarbo. I was not sure she would say yes. She had landed with her horse, but not with us adult. She was impatient, irritable and stubborn as sin. I was afraid that she would say no just to defy. She looked long at me and said "Yes, I will remain. I will go for the next course. I shall stay until I will see you get really pissed off at me or anyone else ". I replied that I thought it was a nice challenge that I adopted it and that I knew one who would be pleased with her decision. That one was her horse. "Yes," she said, "without my horse, I had never bothered to challenge you."

In the co-therapy mountains one memory is added to another memory, which in turn raises a further memory and so on. In the end, it is a string of memories. They all tell me, again and again, of my co-therapist's ability to build trust with someone and that this trust also spills over on me. When our partnership is working well, when the horse trusts me and follows me, then

the horse's trust for me also becomes a possible trust for my student towards me. "Will this big horse feel safe with Sven then maybe I will too." When I become insensitive and push on too much, the student still does not give up. She stays for her friend's sake, my co-therapist, and I may be given a second chance.

The Therapist - The Horse - The Parallel Process

You are in a group of colleagues for the first time. You find that you start to feel uncomfortable. Your insecurity is increasing. Your way of expressing yourself gets a little inhibited, your voice sounds forced. You are shrinking, and you do not do yourself justice. You regress. Blinkers go on, your vision is reduced.

That's when you should hear your mentor's voice. "Do not miss the chance. Take a big step aside, take a deep breath, tear off your blinkers and star to see. It is not you who are shrinking; you're in a group that makes you shrink. Your confusion is not yours, it belongs to the group. Your eyes are still free and open. They have not yet been clouded by the group. You can hear the group's signals. It signals insecurity and discomfort. Now you know what you have to work with and work towards. It is this group that is responsible for receiving and managing young people's anger, despair, fear, frustration and all the confused ways of trying to make contact and to reach out. It is this group that has the task of making young people feel seen, feel safe and know that there is hope for change. It is this group that is the instrument. If this instrument does not work there is little chance for positive change. The juveniles are left to find their own survival in a group where all are in crisis, crises with many different faces. You realize that it is not surprising that this form of treatment often is described as schools of crime and not in terms of treatment.

In the previous chapter, we talked about trust as one of the main bulwarks of a therapeutic work. In compulsory treatment another of these basic cornerstones is the need for a well functioning group of staff that are safe with each other regarding working methods and goals. In compulsory treatment, this is a cornerstone that can easily rock the construction. Here are two groups that have to interact in two

parallel processes under different conditions and often with unclear and contradictory messages.

Have you seen a tuliprose? Do you want to see one? Compulsory treatment of young people is one. It is an attempt to reconcile power with treatment. There are those who believe that this is almost an impossible task. Many are those gardeners who have seen their tuliprose plants wither and die. Still they continue. There are many like you who think that young people should get another chance before society capitulates to alienation and prison sentences. The task is difficult. Think for yourself. You are young, you are in crisis, everything is wrong and impossible, everything goes black, the adult world is threatening and uncomprehending, and this adult world puts you by force to a closed section of coercive treatment. In this situation, it is not easy to feel the gardener's loving care. In this situation, it is not easy to be a gardener and to see that everything he does and everything he wants to do is misunderstood and rejected. There is war and it is a question of survival.

Many historians argue that the only thing that we have been able to learn from history is that we do not learn anything. We make the same mistakes over and over again. There is one exception, however, and that knowledge has been used by rulers throughout the centuries. A group or land with a lot inner conflicts will yield to one unit under external threat. The prime solidarity is with the group, Each new staff knows that the first commandment is to show solidarity with their colleagues. Each new juvenile in compulsory care knows that the first commandment is to show solidarity with their group. Here we have two teams who start a treatment process that is doomed to failure if you cannot create a situation where it is equally important to show solidarity with a juvenile as with a staff regardless of group membership. This objective can often feel utopian.

A girl who has lived a long time in a closed section gives her views on the staff team and she compares her situation with that of a horse at a riding school.

'Compulsory care and riding school are alike. In compulsory care they have to force you to be good. They cannot wait, as

there is no time to wait. They punish you, instead of simply waiting. It is similar with the horses at a riding school, as they are forced to be good everyday. That is why you are allowed to whip them. They are the only animals you are allowed to hit, as you have to show who's boss. There is no question about this. You are the rider and you are the one who makes the decisions. It won't work if you allow the horse to decide. Warders are like that too, as they hit us with rules. We are not allowed to do this or that. If we still do this or that they will hit us with solitary confinement, stop our leave, take away our pocket money, or shout at us in our therapy sessions. They, too, must show us that they are in charge, or they cannot be considered adult. If you let young people make decisions, then everything will simply fall to pieces. The youngsters must not be allowed to take charge.

What's painful is that it's true. If the horses were in charge of the riding school, they wouldn't care less about us. Similarly, if we were in charge of a closed section, we wouldn't give a toss about the warders - we'd just do our own thing. This is because we have never had time to get to know them properly. They want us to look up to them, as you would an idol, trust them and do whatever they want. They want to make us do this by using rules. It will never work.

There are some staff members who we obey. They have the same status in the care group as the girls who can make the horses obey. The girls look up to them. It all depends on how they treat us. Do they frighten us or do they treat us fairly? Both can make someone obey. There is always something special about those who can get awkward horses or awkward children to obey. At least this is what I believe they think

Nobody gives a damn whether the horses or we are given a chance to be good. The only opportunities we are given, are to be nasty or indifferent and so we never become good. Some may be good occasionally. It may be helpful to keep your head down - no need to worry, keep things on an even keel. A closed unit is similar to a riding school, as it is easier to go with the flow. Troublemakers are sent to solitary confinement or transferred, just as difficult horses are sold or sent to the abattoir. Many of the warders probably want to do well, just as we girls do in the stables, but it never happens. They go home, just as we do, and new staff keeps on arriving. No one new can be the same as anyone who has left. It becomes hard to trust anybody. If you want to be friends with a warder, you must be able to rely on his backing when you are right and for him to be there when you need him, but you can never be sure. Perhaps he wants to, but hasn't got the courage to risk it in front of the other warders. He can never be a real friend you can look up to, someone you can follow. In my boyfriend's gang, they stand by each other to the death. This is how strong the bond between real mates can be. I want my horse to have that same strong feeling for me, to follow me to death itself. You can never talk about these kinds of feelings in an institution. There, all you have are rules. Everyone has to obey these rules. At a riding school there are rules too. They are displayed everywhere - rules instead of friendship. You cannot ignore a friend but you can ignore a rule.

We sat in the clubroom at Frossarbo and went through the barn rules. We checked if we thought they were still all right. Were all there? Helmet on, keep track of the students who were out driving, be prepared to receive and help etc.. Should any rule be added, should any be revised? I threw forward a proposal for a new rule, mostly to get a discussion started. Can we agree on the following rule: You must always be just as fair regardless if it is a student, staff or horse.

Is it possible? said one of the students. *For the staff, that is an obligation. But for students, can it really be? Well maybe after a long time.*

A constant current phase of the treatment process is that of training personnel and to make them become a strong and competent working team. That has been my main task during most of my working years, before I started Stall Frossarbo, that and research. My experiences as a supervisor and personnel group leader is material for a book by itself. Here, however, I will share with you one simple experience and one definition of a goal that is of importance.

The simple experience is this one:

You have taken on the task of becoming a Personal group leader to a treatment group in compulsory treatment. What awaits you?

Besides all the usual group dynamics, with formal and informal leaders, contract and unlocks, you will almost always encounter a group where members' time in the group varies widely. Some have been there for a long time, others are entirely new. A good start could be to ask everyone in the group to share their dreams, their thoughts and motives they once had when they started their work. It will work like a reset of the group. Everyone is there at the same time and all will be part of the conversation. The shared dreams could also be good to go back to in finding common grounds in future conflicts.

Then to the definition of a goal:

The goal for the personal group should be set high. The group will be a group where everyone takes management responsibility. You want a team with just leaders. This may provoke but opens up for an important discussion about leadership and treatment responsibilities. Let me give you an example.

How a modern manager should look like may vary in books on leadership. Some years ago a good leader was a leader who pointed with his whole hand

At one special lecture I gave several managers were present. I argued that in order to get a powerful treatment group, you have to have a team where everyone takes responsibility and has the courage to take responsibility and where everyone is safe with that decision. All should point with their whole

hands. I met opposition. Would this not be like a Polish parliament if all pointed with their whole hands. I suggested that we should see if we could agree upon how a good manager would look like.. We agreed on the following: A good manager knows the responsibility for his operations, he feels responsible for its people, and he takes responsibility for himself. He takes the knocks, he does not only suffer from them, he gives criticism from the front and not from behind he stands for himself. Which of these characteristics is not of value for his team members? The question was asked rhetorically. All realized that all properties were assets. I then went on to say that with such a group the myth of the lonely leader could be left out. He would certainly have to take the crucial decisions, they were not removed by delegation, but they were decisions made in the open and even if he would get reprimands from above, he had nevertheless always his team around him What was the weakness in that? This was just strength all the way through. I remembered that I got some acceptance from the managers.

It is now you will raise your voice. It is now that you are saying:

"This is not a question of what is opportune or not, this is not a matter of playing with words. This is not about us. This is about our students. We have an **obligation** as the girl from Stall Frossarbo so rightly put it. We must be able to take a personal responsibility, to meet the student where he or she is, not hide behind rules. Not dare to stand up for fear of getting reprimands or give in to group pressure. In the therapeutic process we need to be able to say yes or no when we feel that the situation calls for a yes or a no. We can not over and over again let the students down when we are at the brink of understanding and seeing each other. If so there will never be a build of trust.

Our intentions and our hopes are that the way we work together will spread to the juveniles, that they too start to dare, start to take responsibility, stand on their own, give feedback from the front and not from behind, and take care of themselves. This is really what 24 hour therapy is all about, to be together and to get better.

It will be much easier for you to take care of yourself and dare to stand up for what you believe in, if you feel loved and secure in your working group. I have long jokingly claimed that there should be a law that says that at every work all must have at least one best friend. In The Co-therapy mountains, I can see how at Stall Frossarbo this legislation was put to work.

I have used so far the term Parallel process as social psychological concept to describe two groups that interact with each other. I now turn to the original meaning of the concept to highlight the situation for young people in institution care something that is often overlooked.

It can be exciting and fruitful to insert a theoretical concept in a slightly different context. Parallel Process was at the beginning a concept that was used within psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theories.

One of the thoughts that the psycho-dynamic models are built around is that early traumatic experiences repressed or misinterpreted by the child, will appear as aching spots that will affect and sabotage in adulthood. One goal of therapy is to try to locate and process these trouble spots. The old grand therapist Sigmund Freud thought that free associations were a way to get in touch with these early experiences. To lie stretched out on a couch would increase the capacity to associate freely and with a therapist who stayed in the background. The therapist would disrupt the process as little as possible. He was to be like a shiny mirror that reflected the patient's thoughts and helped the patient to interpret what the patient felt. Did the patient rage against the therapist, the interpretation was that this was a rage against an authoritarian person in the patient's life. This phenomenon was named transference and became an important part of the interpretation process.

As experiences were collected, one started to wonder about the quality of the mirror.

The therapist's role as a clear mirror that reflected and interpreted the patient's problem turned out to be a role that was easily influenced by the patient's problem. Therapists mirrors clouded and the patient's transferences were blocked

by the therapist counter transferences. The therapist had to go into therapy himself to work out his own counter transferences. The concept of counter transference resulted in an extension to a new concept, parallel process, which would give its name to a strange phenomena that seemed occur the therapist almost unconsciously. The therapist took on the problems of his client and the way he managed to copy with them would reflect the process of the therapy. If he coped well, his client would also feel better. The concept of parallel process came into being.

Therapists, contact persons and staff at institutions often use the concept of parallel process to describe their own difficulties due to being exposed to clients with severe problems. Many psychologists describe it as if the therapist almost gets poisoned and that it is of utmost importance that counselling will help him. The focus is on staff and their need for mentoring and "detoxification". They are the once who become infected. But what about the students? They live in the same group capable of intoxication. How poisonous are they?

By turning on the lamp, setting the concept of parallel process in a reverse connection, the picture changes and new contours emerges. We see students who are initially weak and fragile, being forced into a group as a result of their problems, a group regarded as a poison producer. In contrast to the staff, they have no chance to go home after a shift. They are there by force compelled to be there all the time. How will the students be helped with their detoxification?

The therapist who walks in the Co-therapy mountains realizes that he has a colleague who is already helping him. The colleague has been there all the time and he has quietly done his job.

In The Co-therapy mountains, with an inverse parallel processing concept, the horse comes into a new role. The girls could walk away from the group and seek the presence and courage from her horse. When the pressure becomes too strong, the girl could find her own sanctuary where only she and her horse were.

A pupil at Frossarbo:

Pysen and I could be alone together and we could be silent together, and it was good. Against people you do not always know how to behave. Do I do it right, say it right? You have to watch your tongue. It did not have to bother with Pysen. I had a friend up there in the stable. I did not have to hang with the other girls if I did not want to, if I did not stand in their particular ways, or jargon. Pysen enabled me to be myself and to be by myself if I wanted. And to have someone to take responsibility for and not just get stuck in your own thoughts. You get to think new thoughts.

We had a conflict among the girls. It was a group conflict. Three girls against three girls. Emotions surged, invectives rained. A girl stood up and said:

"You are some real small kids. Yes you are. You just keep on. I have my horse. I do not care for your craps. "

The students at Stall Frossarbo seemed many times to choose their horses based on their own self-image and their own needs. They chose their horses because they seemed to be mean, unwieldy, ugly, afraid, alone, because no one wanted them but also because they seemed nice and quiet.

"I chose her because she was of a really bad kind. She was kicking and biting. She had her own will. I chose her because I could recognize myself in her. Actually, I think we were quite alike. I knew she would understand me. "

"I had to choose between Stumpan and Lillen. I fell for Lillen's eyes. They looked friendly. He was not afraid of me. He would endure me.

What would Lillen have to stand?

"We are so scared and sad. In the end you do not have the strength to not be afraid anymore. You may be sad but not afraid. You go on instead. Then you can almost be happy. How weird it is. Many times it is enough to say nasty things. Others are afraid of you. I also fear bullshit. It is odd that I

know that many people are talking shit about me but I would like and hope that it is not so. It is then safer to be really awful and really talk shit .That is how crazy it is. But horses do not talk shit. When you become friend with a horse, you do not have to be afraid. Those who are unkind to horses are afraid of horses. They do not understand that horses are not people and that you do not need to be afraid of a horse. I saw Lillen's eyes. They were not afraid of me. They looked sympathetic. They were nice. I felt safe with his eyes. I thought that he could probably put up with me. "

The girls felt that their horses were in the same precarious situation as they were. The horse knew. He knew what it was all about. He had been there.

In a parallel process with the light put backwards one can sense that a student's choice of horse, helps to increase the ability of that horse to detoxify. The image of our co-therapist is becoming more diverse. He is a colleague with more strings to his instrument.

One string is the D-string, the string of detoxification.

To be continued