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# Bibliotherapy - A Book as a Medicine for the Soul

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**Abstract:** Reading books helps to better understand the world we live in or the problem we are in, affects the development of critical and creative thinking, helps to achieve better family relationships, can move us to a completely different world, and we can see our own lives through the lives of other characters. Each story read can have several functions: mirror function, model function, mediator function, storage action, stories to help with regression. It has been proven that the effects of reading are numerous, and some of them are to alleviate stress, develop empathy, indicate that problems have alternative solutions, develop creativity, optimistic view of reality, influence the development of critical thinking, motivate.... This paper presents the stories of people whose books have helped them solve life's adversities and overcome many prejudices, troubles and misunderstandings, and helped them in personal and social development. The results showed that books were a cure for divorce and partner problems, marital and family conflicts, lack of parenting skills, adolescent crisis, postpartum depression, traumatic experiences and domestic violence, loss and grief, behavioral disorders, addiction and eating disorders. Librarians have been educated by encountering such cases, so now they can also recommend books that are a "cure for the soul", books on certain topics to solve some life issues and doubts. Research in libraries in recent years shows that readers are increasingly turning to books to solve their problems, seeking help and support from librarians. Man's need to communicate with someone who tries to understand and help him has been extremely pronounced lately. Properly selected reading material has therapeutic value, especially when reading replaces negative emotions with positive ones. Bibliotherapy has obvious value in that it provides the opportunity for the participants to recognize and understand themselves, their characteristics, and the complexity of human thought and behavior. It may also promote social development as well as the love of literature in general, and reading in particular.

**Keywords:** Bibliotherapy, Book, Library, Reading, Medicine

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## 1. Introduction

Bibliotherapy is the therapeutic use of books in the treatment of diseases and personal problems, and it can also be said that bibliotherapy is any planned use of books in order to solve a problem or improve personal growth and development [1]. Book therapy is also used as an auxiliary method, because the conversation after reading the book can lead to the realization of one's mistakes and desire for change, dealing with one's own needs, values and boundaries as the main basis for a more successful life. In some literary works, certain wholes can be identified as motivational and can be effective on people who are in certain life situations. Psychoanalytic interpretation understands the literary text as the result of associative processes connected to primary psychic events, in order to reach a compromise between

instinctive desires and resistance to repression [14].

People try to suppress the feelings and emotions that cause many life situations and many succeed by fleeing into the world of books. Librarians are in direct contact with readers, listening to their life stories and trying to help them. Research has been done to see if books help people in which situations and how much.

Bibliotherapy is a technique that uses literary sources to help individuals resolve complex problems [9]. Some books can become a kind of universal medicine, others can help with states of fatigue, loneliness, psychological absence, lack of companionship, love, understanding, self-esteem, feelings of "I don't need anyone", others are useful in states of apathy, lack of support, fourth will help you understand yourself, the adolescent - to survive the critical age, etc. People and children experience catharsis while reading, a process during which the reader, by sharing emotions with a literary

character, can experience emotional relief.

Library employees talk to readers, listen to their needs, life stories and direct them to a certain type of literature. The education of librarians mostly depends on personal affinities, desire to learn something new and interests in a certain field, digitalization, librarianship, marketing.

After a short research we conducted, we and the readers realized that reading is not just a hobby for relaxation, it is a skill that has fantastic health benefits, especially if you do it every day. The research helped us to find out that books have a healing effect, and that Psychology, Sociology, Pedagogy are areas that a librarian must know if he wants to help the user.

## 2. Reading as Medicine

The library "Dimitrije Tucović" in Lazarevac is available to its users from birth to the cause of life, and together with them it goes through various life stages. They all come from the literature they would read, and each reading has different effects and that is why useful reading, aesthetic, relaxing, prestigious and supported reading can be singled out. It is considered that only prestigious (reading that affects the view and self-esteem of the reader) and supported (reading that includes the personal views of the reader, his critical thinking) have for the soul and therapeutically they are. For a person exposed to stress, reading is sometimes the only salvation. Personal development with the book can be monitored through all seasons and through all people of different socio-economic status, regardless of education, employment status or activity, gender, financial status. Reading treatment is one part of the system psychotherapy. Bibliotherapy, a therapeutic approach that uses literature to support good mental health, is a versatile and cost-effective treatment option often adapted or used to supplement other types of therapy. Bibliotherapy has been used to pursue a wide range of goals including educating clients, decreasing anxiety and depression, enhancing social contacts, and developing study skills. There are different kinds of bibliotherapy. Some books help with insecurity, anxiety, lower value complexes. Most therapists and librarians trained in bibliotherapy will have a list of books that relate to different issues. There are also several sites and databases online that give suggested or recommended titles based on a particular concern or mental health issue.

The importance and influence of art on human health has been growing over the years. The benefits of bibliotherapy, the use of the written word for therapeutic purposes, have been known for centuries, even millennia. According to the Russian author Averbach, bibliotherapy ("reading healing") can be seen as a possibility of a positive influence of literature on building willpower, optimism and self-belief as desirable traits in the process of overcoming stressful situations. It also does not always have to be focused on this goal - reading literature, but it can contribute to a better mood and enable a person to get out of constant thinking about the problem [6]. Aleksandra Vraneš states in her work "From Manuscript to Library" that librarianship is a library activity

that takes place for therapeutic purposes [2].

In conversations with our dear readers, they revealed that the reasons for using literature as a "therapy of the spirit" are distraction from sad thoughts, unwanted questioning and fears, removing unnecessary indifference or impatience, increasing the ability to achieve goals in cooperation with others, motivation to observe one's own problems on the side, help to pass the time easier. Irvin Yalom writes in his work "Becoming Myself – A Psychiatrist's Memoir" that the library brought him into contact with the wider world he longed for, the world of history, culture and ideas [7].

While the profession creates methodological bases for librarianship, in practice library employees and readers independently try to choose books to read, which have a psychotherapeutic effect. In many countries, this method is very popular and belongs to expressive methods such as dance, writing and music. Literature, any, from poetry through bestsellers, historical novels to classics, helps to better understand oneself and one's own problems. It is not uncommon for people to return to their favorite books that they know will lift their spirits when life is not going exactly as they imagined. Users of the "Dimitrije Tucović" Library say that in this way they are looking for written advice or inspiration in order to make it easier for them to face significant life challenges. Trust in the relationship of librarian reader or patient psychologist is one of the key things. The right measure of trust for an individual in a particular relationship is best based on the history of exchanging beliefs in reliability and showing trust between him and the other person [12].

Through the use of stories in fiction and nonfiction books, poetry, plays, short stories, and self-help materials, a therapist and librarian can help you gain a deeper understanding of the concerns that brought you into counseling sessions in the first place. People who saw the interlocutor in the librarian, opened their souls and often looked for literature that will help build their willpower, optimism and faith in themselves, as well as desirable titles that will help them overcome stressful situations and contribute to a better mood. Thinking about the problem. Carl Gustav Jung in his work "Red Book" says to understand yourself, and then you will be well understood. Understand yourself, it is the best skin against sensitivity [11].

The book can stimulate peace from a state of unrest. Suppression of restlessness can lead to symptoms of some serious diseases and it is necessary to talk about the state of the soul. Fear is one of the strongest emotions we fight, so if you can overcome fear, you can certainly overcome other emotions [10].

A librarian who loves bibliotherapy and applies it in his work must know the basics of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has taught us that behind the visible, the obvious, the manifest, there are contents and forces at work, which, although not directly visible, can still be accessible to knowledge [13].

## 3. Life Stories

Mature life confronts us with a series of new problems,

loss of loved ones, disagreements at work and it is easier to get over everything with the help of a book. Stress is extremely important for the life of every family and is greatest at the points of transition from one phase to another during the development process [3]. Respondents who come to the Dimitrije Tucović Library in Lazarevac said that reading makes them feel that their needs are respected by others, overcoming the view of attributing guilt, developing a tolerant attitude, forming the ability of empathy and mutual understanding, forming the ability for self-analysis, strengthening independence and striking a balance between the aspirations of family members to cohesion on the one hand and independence on the other. Cultural life is defined as the totality of interest in relevant cultural values in the immediate environment and participation in the creation of cultural goods. The frequency of going to one of the cultural institutions was determined as an indicator of the level and quality of cultural spending. Of course, the interests and frequency of departure, among other things, depend on the offer of cultural content in the living space of the individual.

Cultural life is defined by the wishes and needs of consumers, but also by possibilities, as well as the realization of the need for something like that. It is closely related to education, financial status and differs by age, gender, race, regional and religious groups. The Library "Dimitrije Tucović", as one of the leading cultural institutions in the city, is always available to our fellow citizens. By living fast, people become alienated from each other, with more and more frequent spiritual crises, and that is why they try to find the meaning of their existence, comfort and hope in books. Bibliotherapy, on the one hand, puts the book among those primary human needs - prevention and the provision of psychological help in a wide range, and thus pragmatizes its purpose, adapting it to modern human internal needs. People are born into stories, their social and historical contexts constantly lead them to tell stories about certain events, to remember stories about them, and to leave other events untold [4]. Certain books can encourage them to tell those stories as well. In the book "Psychoanalysis and Literature", one can find the interpreted effect of Ernest Hemingway, Kafka, Camille and Faulkner on readers and the emotions that reading their works evokes. By reading Henry Miller and analyzing his writing techniques and personalities in books, we get answers on the topic of the modern man in search of himself [14].

People with a small child, a preschool child, a school child, or an adolescent come to seek help, looking for an easier way to balance their needs and the needs of younger members. Separating parents from children is a change that is painful for both of them, a loss that only a functional family can endure without major problems [3]. Both parents and children are the ones who in that period of parting are trying to get over the book, to divert their thoughts and fill their time. They usually turn to this type of help when they feel "empty nest syndrome". This implies that the married couple, having lost their children, experiences a great emptiness and loss of the meaning of further living. In conversation with

our readers, we learned that books were a balm for their souls when their children went to other cities for school, when they entered into and left marital communities, when they started new lives in other countries. A woman whose son traveled to Australia because he got a job and wanted to continue living there, read novels in which the plot takes place in that area. Following the descriptions of that country, she convinced herself that her descendants enjoyed exactly those blessings and she experienced parting much easier.

The situation is especially difficult when it comes to the loss of one partner, or when it comes to a single-parent family [3]. Women usually find it difficult to bear the loss of a partner, so facing the departure of a spouse usually leads to insecurity, unhappiness and tension. Certain titles from popular psychology helped our readers not to lose heart in those moments, but to adopt self-confident body language and self-confident behavior as an integral part of everyday life. Librarians may select a story with a fictional character that is dealing with grief and trauma from losing a loved one for a client who recently experienced a death in the family. Most people are overwhelmed with fear when faced with the unknown. It shouldn't be because it's nothing but the beginning of an adventure and the possibility of something happening [18].

One girl told us that after dealing with this problem, she managed to solve the problem of low self-efficacy with affirmative books that taught her to fight the consequences and that she has enough faith in herself to build the belief that there will be no negative outcomes.

Children's librarianship can have a good effect on their self-confidence, because a book can explain to a child how to deal with stress, develop creativity and solve problems. Parents can help their children a lot in the process of maturing, because in the period of growing up, they can face the tendencies of responsibility or avoid them. To be successful, parents must be willing to dedicate time to them and decompose by meeting them [8]. Many come to the Library looking for books that guide them on how to best guide their descendants.

Retirement most often leads to a decrease in economic income, a decrease in functional abilities due to old age, illness and excess of free time. Diverting thoughts from facing the near end is best with a good book! The library in Lazarevac also offers refuge to its native writers who creatively spend their free time devising new projects and reading their works. An increasing number of readers over the age of sixty-five tell us that our oldest fellow citizens embellish their loneliness with books. There are a lot of lonely people, as the statistics show us, and finding a kind librarian with whom you can talk about your troubles brings people a sense of belonging and happiness. Our readers feel they belong to the Library. The biggest gift is their smile. Emotions and feelings do not act in isolation: reason is needed to judge our actions [15]. Adequately selected books help us to activate our mind as soon as possible and help us in certain situations.

Reading and talking about what we read prepares us to

understand that life is learned, that life is an adventure and that we do not know what awaits us from the next corner, but that reading can prepare us to cope at every opportunity because we learn, grow and enrich from books your life. Many of them who, due to the loss of loved ones, rejection in society, divorce, poor communication with children and other problems, read books on certain topics, from poetry to bestsellers, professional literature, historical novels to classics, on the advice of librarians, friends or doctors, returned to a library with a positive opinion of the influence of that literature on building their strength of will, optimism and faith in themselves.

Our readers rewrite motivational sentences from books and read them often to start applying them. They often say, "I use my mind to ask myself a practical question and I consult with my heart by asking myself a personal question. Then, after listening to myself and others, I make a better decision and put it into action" [17].

## 4. Conclusion

Lifestyles are relatively coherent sets of material and symbolic practices in everyday life - patterns of behavior in consumption, resource use, interpersonal interaction and self-expression - that crystallize into differential configurations of cultural identity of individuals, families and groups [5]. Free time is an important social phenomenon and as such is unavoidable in the process of socialization of children, young people and the elderly. People who read books on certain topics, from poetry to bestsellers, professional literature, historical novels to classics, on the advice of a therapist, librarian or friend, due to the loss of loved ones, rejection in society, divorce, poor communication with children and other problems, returned to a library with a positive opinion of the impact of that literature on building their willpower, optimism and self-belief. The ambitions of the reader will generally be satisfied if they successfully show how the problem arose and what answers were given to it [16]. Books can help in spiritual maturation and in overcoming obstacles that stand in our way. Narrative therapy in any language uses a language that conveys the belief in human potential for change and the belief that conversations and stories have profound consequences [4].

Research shows that people who have more trust in a librarian talk to him more openly and trust him to overcome their problems more easily. Trust is an aspect of modern life that pervades everything [12].

The will to work on oneself, a positive attitude towards life and the desire for success move people to come to the Library. The read word is able to provoke different emotions: sadness, grief, happiness and joy, and some of them lead to catharsis, which is good for the soul. Most professionals agree reading is a productive activity that can promote good mental health, as reading has been shown to increase empathy, sharpen the mind, and impact behavior. Research in the library has shown that readers are increasingly turning to books to solve their psychological, mental and emotional

problems and looking for help and support from librarians.

A nice word and an iron door opens, a proverb that is our guide for welcoming and addressing readers. And a smile and a nice word can immediately provoke better feelings in the visitor. The book has a lot and can always find a suitable reading that will improve the mood of the readers, whether they are sad, depressed, disappointed or looking for a solution to a certain problem.

After the introspection, everyone contentedly admits that our institution makes them happier and more satisfied because they realized that our librarians care about them and that they can always feel the warmth in our space.

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