Workshop at the Aszódi Night Shelter

At the Aszódi Night Shelter we first organized the "Visual Voices" group with the participation of three volunteer colleagues. They wanted to learn the method, which I shared over the course of four sessions. One of them joined me in co-leading the groups held with the residents. She already had several decades of experience in conducting sessions and team-building activities. Additionally, she was able to put her storytelling talent to good use in the project.
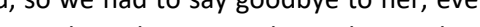
With her help, the recruitment process also took place, during which we initially invited seven residents. They received personalized invitations that included the dates of the sessions and assured them that their identities would not be revealed to anyone. Everyone accepted the invitation with enthusiasm and were glad to have the opportunity to share their opinions on such an important topic. In the meantime, one of the women moved out; as she is in a wheelchair, we didn't want to burden her by asking her to come back for the sessions. Two others didn't return to the shelter in time for the first session and we were unable to reach them later. So in the end, four people attended the first meeting.

We welcomed them with music, coffee, and delicious sandwiches. One of them had just been verbally abused by her partner, so for her, it was a great relief to be among women, in a space where it was okay to cry and share her problems without fear of being judged.
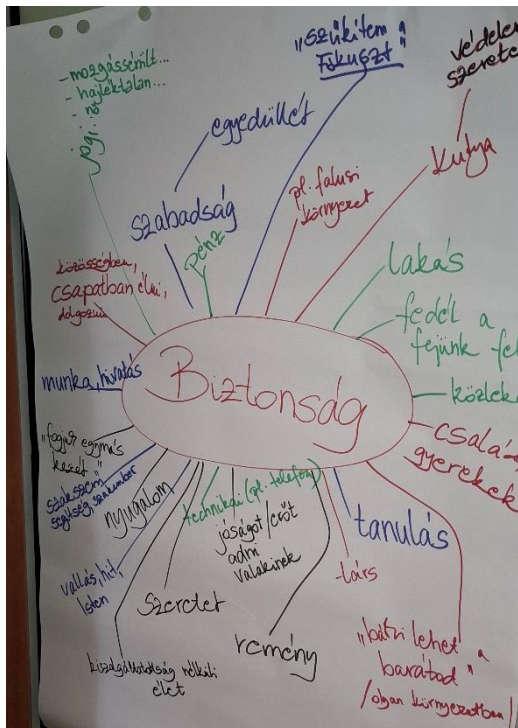
During the first meeting, we worked together to define what safety means to each participant. The most insightful definition was that safety is the opposite of vulnerability. Naturally, the first thought was secure housing – a roof over one's head. Interestingly, money or food didn't come up in the list; those were things we had to mention ourselves. After that, we asked them to express these thoughts through images. We handed out cameras and tried them out together. One of the women was so protective of her camera that she handed it in at the reception, afraid it might be stolen even within the facility.

A few days later, I ran into another participant who told me she was grateful for being allowed into the group, as it had calmed her so much that she was even performing better at work.

My co-facilitator and I were curious to see what kind of photos would be created. Unfortunately, one of the clients developed a health issue, so we are continuing with her individually. She didn't want to drop out because of this—she is determined to take the photos no matter what. Another participant moved abroad, so we had to say goodbye to her, even though we would have loved to see her images. She had chosen homelessness voluntarily in order to stay with her partner, which would have brought an especially interesting perspective.

So by the second meeting, only two residents attended. We welcomed them with freshly picked roses from the garden, foamy coffee, sweets, and music. My co-facilitator told the story of The Three Little Pigs, which we then analyzed together in a group discussion. We asked them who the wolf in the story might represent—whether there is such a figure in their own lives. We also explored what the best foundation for the "house of life" might be. On what can we build a truly secure life? To deepen this, we chose a creative activity: they were asked to build a house using paper cubes and pebbles. Beautiful creations emerged—complete with fish ponds, gardens, and walkways—and the task also brought up childhood memories.

After that, we looked at the photos together, and we also showed the participants our own pictures. While viewing the images, new ideas emerged about what else might be worth photographing. So we said goodbye with the plan to write the narrations the following week, incorporating the new photos into the collection.

We also asked them to think about how we might present the creations in an exhibition format, so that their message could reach decision-makers. That's where we'll continue next time.