

# **Probation work during corona: “My contact with clients is more frequent and intense than ever”**

**An article written by Fréderique, behavioral trainer and supervisor at the Dutch Probation Service for Addicted Offenders (SVG)**

To carry out probation work during the corona pandemic requires creativity and adaptability. Fortunately there are many colleagues who were able to adapt themselves extremely quickly to the new situation and to continue their work in an innovative way, or even help out others in places where support was urgently needed.

“Before the corona virus came to the Netherlands I had just begun giving the BORG training (on stopping violence in relations, red.) to four clients”, Fréderique starts. “A small, nice group. However now because of the Covid-19 measures the group trainings cannot take place I try my best to keep in touch with all four participants. Especially in these times there is an increased risk of domestic violence, so I do not want to lose sight of them. I regularly call them by phone and remind them of the tools we used in the BORG trainings. During these moments of contact I can feel that they do not experience this as “control”, but appreciate the support very much.”

## **From the attic**

Besides BORG Fréderique also gives Lifestyle trainings. “I regularly deliver these sessions individually and tailor-made”, she explains. “Like recently for a client who had just started and was very motivated to make something out of it. After talking to the supervisor in charge I asked this client if he would be willing to follow the training online? His answer was positive so I now give these video-call trainings from my – fortunately classically styled – attic at home.”

## **Keep motivated**

“I have a flipchart here and a small desk – in that way I can make notes for him. I send my instructions via email or whatsapp and that goes really well. The giving of online trainings is quite intensive – you constantly see yourself and have to invest in keeping the conversation going. But on the other hand it gives me a lot of satisfaction, because by doing so I can keep my client’s motivation alive – something that might not have been possible if the training would have stopped for a long period. My client is now able to keep his drug and alcohol abuse under control even during this difficult time.”

## **Hotline via telephone**

“Also regarding supervision matters I am in frequent contact with clients. Every Monday morning I have a telephone hotline with them as they all want to talk. These are very difficult times for them, with the risk of falling back on drugs or alcohol again. They speak to me openly about this – in fact during this period my contact with clients is more frequent and intense than ever. Where normally I spoke them once every two weeks, we are now in contact via telephone twice a week. It really brings you closer to one another.”

### **Working alliance**

“Even though we work from home there is fortunately still a lot of contact between colleagues. We discuss our work cases and share questions and experiences. Naturally there are also whatsapp groups for more light-hearted things and jokes.

My advice to best deal with the actual situation would be: keep in mind your own needs and feel grateful for small things like a “thank you” from a client. And ask others something like “Hey, are you still holding on?” . Also in a difficult time like this the working alliance is of great importance – even though we are not sitting physically together.”