

May we, together with you?

We have a dream – we are, where the youngsters are.

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Fragmented care, an organisation with a lot of cliques, little personal contact, disconnected from the life of the youngster. Would it not be great to bring together all involved in the life of the youngster - caregivers, teachers, therapists - in one location? IZEO makes it possible.

We developed a new education program, called IZEO, which stands for Integrated Care and Education, to combine education and treatment in an optimal way. In this program, the youngster is our main focus. For instance, every day starts off with a briefing and ends with a debriefing in which all teachers, caregivers and scientists partake. Herewith, we increase transparency, break the secrecy, and create a safe environment. We also get to know our colleagues better which enhances feeling of oneness. In addition, it helps us to respond less in the heat of the moment.

Where teams once worked separately with the youngster, nowadays we are present in plain sight and teams are merged in order to increase support. We are all physically and actively present all day long to see the youngster, for better or for worse. Colleagues from different disciplines support each other to de-escalate and to look for possible unmet needs. In addition, to help de-escalate we use a “comfort room”, which helps to break escalation patterns.

Before we implemented our IZEO program, youngsters spent most of their day in their intense secured residential care facility. High fences, heavy metal doors that fall into locks; control and commands were the order of the day. For some time it sure led to positive outcomes, but Non-Violent Resistance gave us new and improved insights. With IZEO the youngster stays in school during the day. Here, the youngster can grow, they can learn from their mistakes, and the chance of hospitalization is substantially smaller. Youngsters report they feel safe, less like a problem child, and part of a team. Since the launch of IZEO there has been a drastic decrease of violent incidents. Moreover, heavy security management, like attendance of security staff or the usage of time-out, are being used less and less.

Increasing the support system for youngsters remains, however, challenging. With P.T.A.-meetings we try to engage the youngsters’ parents as well. Hence, we actually recommend everybody – teachers, practitioners, parents, neighbours, soccer coaches, etc. – to actively create a close support system for each youngster. After all: it takes a village to raise a child.

IZEO is a collaboration between Icarus St. Joseph, closed residential care for children with severe problem behaviour, and St. Jozef Alterius, education for children with psychiatric disorders.