BIBLIOTHERAPY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES
Read to Connect Organization

- Founded in Toronto, Ontario, in 2011
- Offers creative bibliotherapy sessions in a form of a shared reading group to
  - improve the quality of life of individuals facing life crises and transitions;
  - combat social isolation;
  - promote health and well-being.
- **Mission**: to empower individuals to take effective actions on their health and well-being to improve dignity and quality of their lives.
- Website: [http://readtoconnect.ca/](http://readtoconnect.ca/)
Recent Projects

St. John’s Compassionate Mission, Toronto, ON, 2011 – 2012 [www.stjohnsmission.org](http://www.stjohnsmission.org)

The bibliotherapy sessions addressed the following topics:

- Breaking isolation and building connections with ourselves, family, community, and nature.
- Enhancing positive thinking, gratitude and appreciation for Life.
- Being a Parent: Joys and Challenges.
Bibliotherapy, or book therapy - the systematic use of books to help individuals cope with mental, physical, emotional, developmental, or social issues.

Together with some other similar practices, such as art therapy, dance therapy, music therapy, and play therapy, bibliotherapy emphasises the idea of the healing, consoling power of art through its various forms.
The “Book-reader” Interaction

“In reality, every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self” (Proust, M. (1999). In Search of Lost Time: Volume 6, Time Regained. NY: Modern Library, p.322)

“Beyond the literal sense and the literary meaning, the text we read acquires the projection of our own experience, the shadow, as it were, of who we are...” (Manguel, A. (1996). A history of reading. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, p. 267).

The readers “find what they need in what they read.” (Gold, J. (1990). Read for your life: Literature as a life support system. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, p. 279.)
Clinical Bibliotherapy

A reading intervention used by health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, general practitioners, and nurses) as an adjunct to the main treatment modality or a stand-alone alternative treatment to alleviate symptoms of clinical conditions or to help individuals cope with mental issues, chronic and terminal physical conditions, and developmental disorders, as well as the consequences of traumatic events.
Clinical Bibliotherapy

Self-help bibliotherapy – the systematic use of self-help materials as part of clinical interventions.

“Books on Prescription” model of self-help bibliotherapy is based on prescribing self-help books to patients and involves collaboration between health care professionals and public librarians:

- health professionals select self-help titles;
- a public library stocks a prearranged list of books;
- health professionals issue a “book prescription” to patients and refer them to the library
Creative Bibliotherapy

A reading intervention used by non-medical professionals (librarians, educators, and social workers) as a means of improving the quality of life of individuals facing various life challenges, promoting health and well-being, and combating social isolation.

**Settings**: hospitals, hospices, libraries, schools, nursing homes, community centres, community health centres, shelters, and prisons.

**Materials used**: short stories, novels, poems, biographies and autobiographies, memoirs, self-help books, and newspaper and magazine articles.
Creative Bibliotherapy

Get into Reading scheme – a shared reading model developed within the Reader organization in the UK, founded by Jane Davis in 2001.

The Reading and You Service (RAYS) – shared reading groups, or Bookchats run in public libraries in Kirklees, UK.
A Bibliotherapy session involves:

• Read-aloud activity: the facilitator reads the selection aloud clearly.

• Guided group discussion: the facilitator initiates and furthers a discussion allowing each member to contribute ideas and feelings about the literature. The participants are encouraged to ask questions and share their stories relevant to issues and situations discussed.

• Writing activity (optional)

• Follow-up activity: participants’ reflections and comments.
Redefining the place of Bibliotherapy within Public Libraries

“Public library work has always reflected the desire to address the social responsibility inherent in their function. Bibliotherapy schemes have the potential to make a real difference in this respect, providing “medicine for the soul” in diverse and accessible ways to the whole community.”

Creative Bibliotherapy within the framework of traditional “support groups”

A **support group** - a group that “contains individuals with similar problems, who meet on a regular basis to share problems and get support from each other” (*Alcoholics Anonymous, cancer groups, bereavement groups, single parents, isolated seniors, long-term caregivers, etc.*).

A **shared reading bibliotherapy group** can be viewed as a specific type of a support group that involves a systematic use of books (in a variety of fictional and non-fictional genres) and a guided discussion around books to assist individuals in dealing with “life problems.”
Bibliotherapy Program on HIV/AIDS


Thank you!

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