THREADS OF CARE

Making Time for Listening and Nurturing Rabbit-Assisted Interventions in the Women's Unit of Verona Montorio Prison - Italy

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Project Statement

"Threads of Care" is a re-education programme conducted in the women's section of Verona-Montorio District Prison in Italy. Through direct interaction with rabbits, the project fosters experiences of care and responsibility, offering incarcerated women a space to develop new ways of relating to others, to promote emotional well-being, and to embark on a journey of personal growth.

In a context marked by emotional estrangement and difficulties in fulfilling the parental role, animal-assisted interaction offers a space for symbolic repair.

Why rabbits?

The rabbit is a prey animal, hypersensitive to emotions, sudden movements, and tone of voice. It responds exclusively to the quality of one's presence in the here and now, which makes it a powerful emotional mirror. If someone approaches with anxiety or impatience, the rabbit will move away; if that person learns to slow down, lower their voice, and read the animal's subtle signals, the rabbit will draw near again. Through caring for the animal, incarcerated women can develop strategies for emotional self-regulation and rediscover their capacity for nurturing and forming relationships.

Project Goals

- To reactivate caregiving capacities in incarcerated women, who are often affected by a chronic sense of parental inadequacy
- To develop emotional self-regulation strategies through interaction with animals
- To rebuild a positive identity, focused on the present and on personal responsibility
- To integrate individual experiences into a group process, fostering empathy and cohesion

Project Goals

The programme is structured into four progressive phases:

1. Setting up the space: Participants prepare the rabbits' habitat. This phase fulfils the need for symbolic investment in a shared living space.
2. Observation and attunement: Initial interactions occur at a distance. Participants learn to read the animal's body language and reflect it in their own emotional states.
3. Direct care: Brushing, feeding and guided physical contact. Acts of care are reawakened in the body, even before they are expressed in words.
4. Group reflection: Each session concludes with a shared discussion led by a psychologist. The emotions that have emerged are shaped into a narrative, and that narrative becomes a source of self-awareness.

How can you make a difference

"Threads of Care" grows thanks to a community that shares its values and supports its development. You can contribute in several ways:

- Spread the word: share the project with professionals working in social services, psychology, criminal law and animal welfare
- Attend events: take part in public meetings dedicated to the project
- Become a member of the foundation: join the Re-Con-Figure Foundation and provide ongoing support for its activities
- Make a donation: help ensure the continuity of the project and the creation of future editions of the programme.

Project partners

La Città degli Asini (Polverara, PD)

Event and programming partner

LAV (Italy)

Funding partner