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**DON'T WORRY,  
BE ANGRY.**

**TOUCHE**

Woedebeheersing betekent niet dat je niet meer kwaad mag worden. Pro-actief stressen over een eventuele woede aanval maakt de zaken alleen maar erger. Je woede kan net een bron zijn van goede dingen. Omarm je woede, kanaliseer ze, en maak er iets goeds van. Touché vzw helpt je daarbij.

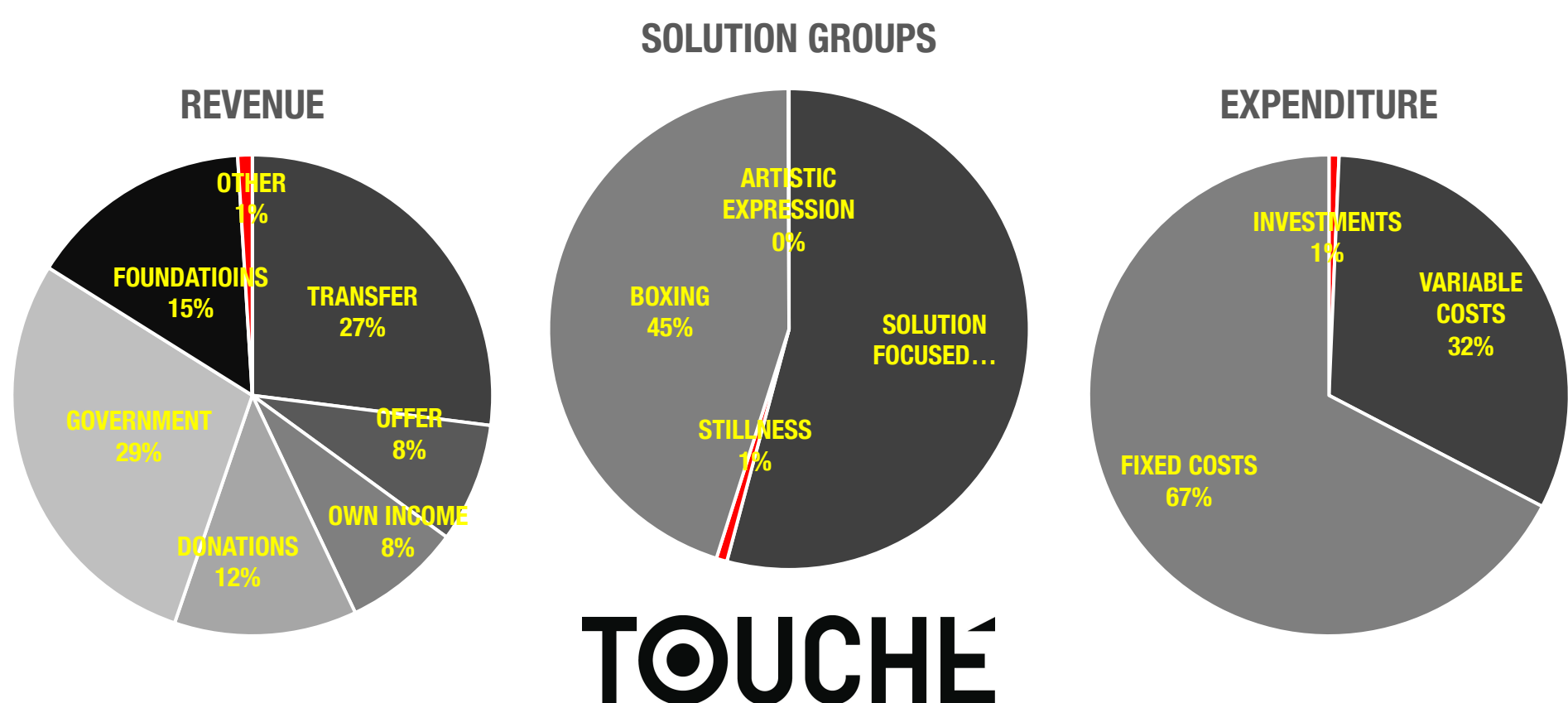
**2** Anger is a magical force  
**0** One melting pot  
**2** We like to keep it simple  
**2** We like differences even more  
**3** Touché through the eyes of others  
Up to you now!

**TOUCHE**

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After 2022 was dominated by the joys of adolescence for Touché, including an emancipation battle with the Justice Department, we were able to reap the benefits in 2023. **Quiet adulthood was at hand along with the fresh excitement of a new phase of life.** For us, 2023 did not involve brand new realizations, new big impact measurements or spectacular events. And yet for us it was one of the most beautiful, if not the most important years in our existence. We went back to basics, were allowed to meet a lot of people in and with their anger, were reminded by them of the why of our existence and got razor-sharp again how we can and want to do that meaningfully. For Touché, 2023 was the year of the recalibration of our compass, which is now once again tuned better than ever to the needs, good intentions and deep desires that lie in people's anger. Our organization is entirely and only at the service of the "wish in disguise" that aggression proves to be again and again. The waiting lists remained off this year too, we deepened our activities, made an experimental side-step here and there, and feasted together with people on the multifaceted beauty of anger. At the same time, focusing on our basic principles and raison d'être is more than ever, perhaps even more than in the early years, a matter of life and death in these social times of disenfranchisement, polarization, hardening and ruthless exclusion.

We would like to take you along that resourcing story that 2023 turned out to be for us, and we do that as much as possible with the words of those who visited us and participated in one of the activities from our solution groups. For only that is our reason for existence and magic. We are aware that we have not yet entered the post-neoliberal era, and so, for those who would still need some numbers to take the rest seriously: In 2023, we went to work 2,077 times with 2,740 people and a budget of € 257.915. 34% of the cost was paid by the participants. 91% (1,889) of those activities took place individually, 9% (188) in groups. Besides the work with visitors to Touché itself and with the people we visited in prison, we were allowed to work in and with another organization 24 times (schools, non-profit organizations, front-line workers). And to completely satisfy our hunger before we can really get to the story, we are happy to throw in a few graphics as well:



# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

No book without a cover and back cover. So first we'd like to take you through the what, how and why of Touché. After all, this is the potting soil in which the stories that follow could germinate.

The **Touché mission statement** reads: We make the world positively aggressive from gent, by making the beautiful side of anger shine. Together with people, we figure out how to do that even more, in all the places they pass with their 'colère'. In this way aggression becomes a magical, beauty and connection creating force.

So **anger, colère, aggression, violence, frustrations, conflict, quarrels, ...** is still our favorite subject, toy and food. As far as we are concerned, it is one of the most "rich" human phenomena, not only because of its universal nature, its unpredictability, the immense energy involved and its incredible persistence - or permanence, if you will, but perhaps most of all because it is driven by eminently irrational human and interpersonal dynamics and is intertwined with just about all social systems.

Aggression is still often seen only as a threat, something to be avoided, to be ashamed of. In doing so, its potential usefulness is also lost. Because aggression represents energy. Without aggression no change, innovation, progress. And so we must look for ways to understand our anger as the '**wish in disguise**' that it actually is and channel it positively so that we can be proud of it. So we assume that anger is not an evil to be banished, but a source full of potential that is better tapped than extinguished or ignored. For it contains 1) a clear signal that something is of great importance and demands change, 2) information about the desired future, and 3) a lot of energy that can be harnessed to realize the desired as well.

Touché transforms anger into a '**force for good**'. Through **solution-focused conversations, trainings, boxing training, stillness sessions and artistic experiments**, people discover how to harness the message and energy of anger to create positive change. We combine individual activities in which people can focus on finding and soigning their own optimal angry temperature with group activities that bring diversity to life in real-life interactions and encounters as well as activities that challenge no-longer-serving social norms. That combination of activities allows people to make more, easier, more refined, smoother positive choices at moments of anger in their lives. Participants can choose to participate in one or more activities, as well as the number or frequency of sessions they participate in. Their interest also determines the next concrete offering, both in terms of content and quantity or frequency (e.g., a new solution group added to the offering).

# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

All over the world, thousands of programs exist that try to do something about violence: ‘victim’ assistance, relapse prevention for ‘perpetrators’, awareness raising, ... And yet, to this day, they have not succeeded in making the world a more peaceful place. They do not take into account the complexity of violence and they deprive everyone involved in violence of the opportunity to take responsibility. By simplifying it into a judicial or mental health issue and outsourcing it to professional experts, we will never be able to adequately address violence. We need dynamic, flexible, diverse, multisystemic responses that restore **agency, human dignity and choice**: each of us must be able to deal with our anger in a way that brings us closer to the person we want to be and can be proud of. Therefore, we must understand and utilize the way everyone on this planet deals with anger, aggression and violence as a fundamental and even existential part of our human existence and coexistence. This will affect the systems we are all part of in our daily lives, as we are all partners, parents, children, employers, friends and citizens. That circular logic is better adapted to the chaotic and irrational nature of violence than any linear logic.

**We need not less, but perhaps even more anger** to create a better world for everyone, and especially more positively channeled aggression. All that anger contains hope, desires for change, a drive to make change happen, commitment, ... If we manage to surf this, we can make the world a better place for everyone. We need to democratize ‘anger transformation’ and, more importantly, anger itself. We need to give it back to people, allow people to be angry and use it to be the person they want to be and co-create the world we dream of for ourselves, our loved ones and the broader society. Currently, anger is suppressed in many parts of the world, in that we do not yet have the general habit of listening carefully to what anger tells us and motivates us. A global social habit we do have is to outsource and professionalize anger management in a broad sense: we let judges, mediators, mental health professionals, ... deal with it, instead of giving it back to the people and communities involved. Research by the World Health Organization has shown that peer mediation programs are most effective with youth violence, and this confirms what we are seeing in the work we do at Touché with experiential expertise and youth.

# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

We are privileged to witness daily that miracles can happen. Or that things that we as a society sometimes seem to have given up on are still possible: People who have been given up by all kinds of systems as "sitting ducks", "unmanageable," "therapy resistant," ... we often see others helping them in the most beautiful, touching ways. They show us that, as human beings, we can truly show solidarity, empathy and concern for others, without the need for anything in return.

The people in action and speaking in [this video](#) about our boxing activities, made in cooperation with the P&V Foundation, know all about it:



Also this year, not only did we have our regular group boxing trainings in Sportschool 9duust, Oudenaarde's prison and in the online gym, we also went into town again, to introduce people to Touché, beautiful anger & boxing in an approachable way.

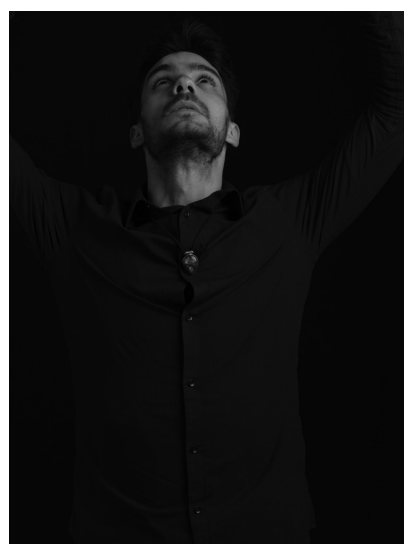


# TOUCHE

# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

In addition to boxing, many people also went into finding stillness in 2023. After an in-depth experiment with 1 stillness approach, this year we resolutely went for the low-threshold tasting mix. By experimenting with different stilling exercises with others, you learn the applications that are most useful to you. We did this a few times in groups, both in the Touché house and in Oudenaarde prison, each time with a mix of Touché enthusiasts and new participants. And every now and then someone would come along for an individual stillness session. The idea is to step into, beside or just out of your anger with full attention and choice. This allows you to choose more of what you focus on and what you shield yourself from.

*"Proud is a big word, but I am very happy to have participated in Touché's stillness day and series. Not only did I learn to calm down, I also learned that I really need it. Especially when I am angry. I think before this I was afraid to do that. That it would be too overwhelming or something. But the opposite is true: just by daring to dwell on my anger in silence, it is transformed into a calm, stable force. Since then I can just be angry, without immediately breaking down into explosions, but by indicating what I don't want for example."*



# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

We also returned to a tried-and-true recipe from previous years: **solution-focused discussion groups**. At their core, these consist of a simple recipe of a few people, preferably with some anger under their belts, and an ever-growing group of friendly but persistent solution-focused questioners. The questions they ask are as simple as they are incisive, genre: What is so important to you to get so angry about? What would you like to do differently? How would you like to coach a class of kids to respond in such situations? What is the best thing that came out of it for you right now?....

The Touché model is a process, not a content model that aims to increase participants' freedom of choice. The questions and needs of the participants are paramount and determine both the participants' individual pathways and the collective offerings. This means that from our side we do not work with predetermined contents, sessions or trajectories, and that participants, for their part, are also free to choose 1 type or just a combination of sessions, one-time participation or a long-term trajectory, regular or ad hoc participation, ...

The focus of any collaboration is the "desired aggressive future." That means we are not necessarily working to reduce, manage or control aggression, but sometimes just to maintain or even increase it. It also means that we do not have to start from a past or present problem to do useful work. Aggression events or incidents may be a trigger for application, but do not play a role before and during participation.

Therefore, the capstone of each session consists of simultaneously seeking 1) the desire and interest in anger and 2) what is helpful to find, regulate and maintain the desired energy level. Since the participants, their needs and their responses to the above questions are by definition changeable, we therefore do not have a pre-programmed offering either. Instead, we engage in a solution-oriented process methodology based on the the Korzybski Institute's Model.

*"How 'Infecting the world positively aggressively' becomes something tangible.  
The solution-oriented discussion group is an amazing experience every time!  
Seeing, hearing and feeling how people from different backgrounds  
and perspectives can find, support and inspire each other,  
makes these group sessions a beautiful blend  
of strength, openness and connection.  
I am grateful to be a part of this  
and it's great that others find this valuable and helpful as well."*

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# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

After a positively aggressive workshop or training, in which we invariably, regardless of the audience (students, counselors, police officers, officials, etc.), look for the beautiful role that anger can play in the lives of the participants themselves, we often hear beautiful discoveries listed:

*"I didn't know that I was so angry myself, or better: that I am allowed to be angry too, and that I am even allowed to be happy about it."*

*"I step out of here as a braver person, with a lot of confidence in my anger."*

*"I am not broken because I am so angry."*

*"Comfort, connection and anger don't have to be opposites. You may put comfort next to anger."*

*"What a wonderfully liberating story you have. It immediately makes me feel freer in my own thinking, and return to my own workplace with gusto."*

*"How wonderfully refreshing. I had become convinced that systems are not made for people and therefore cannot serve people. But you daily create a (non-)system that does just that. There is still hope!"*

*"I hope that in the coming time I will get angry a lot myself and may also detect a lot of anger in others, because we are going to be able to do cool things with that!"*

*"Safety follows from equality, you guys show that. We are also going to try to turn that around."*

*"No matter the situation, I shouldn't hold back my feelings if I don't like something. I have to try to express my feelings in a way that doesn't negatively affect others and myself. It was very valuable for me to hear that these feelings are normal, that everyone can experience them and how to deal with them."*

*"Even anger needs to be taken seriously, and doesn't always have to be bad."*



# TOUCHE

## ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

We see colère being embraced and renamed by people who paradoxically become even **more loving, caring companions for themselves and their loved ones** just as a result. Tonny (19) is certainly one of them. After his parents died a few years ago, Tonny had lived in institutions for years, and now he had recently been living on his own. He had to build his life all by himself. Living alone meant that he also had to take care of himself, his budget, a supportive social network, getting his degree, ... He really wants to make something of his life and is very motivated, but he is also terrified that he will fail. Although he is used and trained to be alone and take care of himself, sometimes he feels super lonely. He sometimes has very intense depressive episodes. The only thing that seems to be able to get him out of that is reacting very aggressive. That's why he came to Touché: he was afraid that his aggression would escalate and take over. In his most fearful thoughts, he might even then commit murder.

When we met with him, Tonny told us his story and immediately added that he didn't want any more therapy because "he had had enough of that by now." But he did feel that he really needed to do something with his depressive/aggressive energy and thoughts. He knew we were doing something with boxing, so he asked if he could do that. He met Hassan, one of the Touché trainers. They talked once about his starting point, story and struggles, and agreed to meet weekly for individual boxing training. Since then, he showed up weekly very punctually, took training very seriously and kept in touch via Whatsapp between training sessions. In the beginning these were thanks for the training and expressions of changes he noticed (e.g. feeling calmer, having his thoughts under control, ...) and after a while he also started to tell Hassan a bit more about the rest of his life, school, ... And so Hassan became more than just his boxing trainer, but also his motivator in other areas of life. Tonny almost finished school and will soon decide what to do next: continue his studies or go to work. He is now making this decision based on what he wants to do and confidence that he will succeed, rather than the paralyzing fear we met him with.

Hassan and Tonny often took pictures of the two of them after a training session. At first, Tonny's face was not visible, as if he wanted to hide himself. After a while, he showed more of his face and eyes. And some time later we even saw a proud guy, proudly posing with his boxing gloves. After a few months of individual training, Hassan proposed to do a duo training with another boy who came to Touché. They both agreed and since then they have trained together occasionally, which helped them both improve their boxing skills as well as trust, experiment, ... in a different social context. At some point, Tonny also asked if he could bring another friend, and in the meantime, a group was formed that comes to box in the Touché basement in varying configurations, now and then even without Hassan.

# ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

We saw people become grateful, happy and proud in witnessing the path their son, mother, companion, ... took in finding appropriate ways to find their good, healthy angry temperature. We regularly get messages from people letting us know that they are so pleased to see their loved one blossom, or how their relationship has become so much better because of it, or how a school or employer is suddenly expressing appreciation rather than threatening suspension or dismissal.

*"You guys really come highly recommended.*

*My daughter has been going with you guys for almost a year  
and she is doing well.*

*I have a top daughter thanks to you guys.*

*You guys are doing a wonderful job."*

**Some people resurface a long time, sometimes even years later.** Sometimes they do so to refuel, because they are going through a difficult period and could use some support, to refresh themselves on what had helped them in the past, to get the words and especially the helpful questions from back then, a bit like your grandmother's spaghetti puts you back on track with the past. Sometimes people return without any question, but they just come to say hello again, have a coffee, hear how things are going at Touché, tell us that they had a baby, ... We love to see those people too. It tells us that the Touché house is a good place to be. Some people share with us a celebration for an important milestone, a diploma, freedom from all legal conditions, a marriage, ... Sometimes people also come to say thank you very explicitly, with a cake, an invitation to visit them in their new home, the offer to be there for someone else if we see a good match with someone, a donation that others can enjoy, ...

**Outside Touché, we also saw delicious angry-makers rise up,** and that got us ready for a new project on positive, everyday activism: a lawyer who tirelessly fights injustice and makes it public on her Facebook page, a cartoonist who showed people the way to stand up against abuse in the church, a photographer who came out with even stronger work after being cancelled by politicians, a researcher who seizes every opportunity not only to show that policy does not work, but also to link very concrete and doable alternative proposals to it, a retired professor who is more active than ever to write books, give lectures, ...

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## ANGER IS A MAGICAL FORCE

We saw people rise up to not only face their own anger and aggression and enter into a beautiful, new relationship with it, but also make the commitment to dare to show up as **ambassadors of powerful vulnerability**, in the hope that others might feel empowered by it. For example, Elias and Alice made [this video](#) together for NWS.NWS.NWS:



TOUCHE

# 1 MELTING POT

Touché assumes that anger and aggression belong to people and therefore to **every human being**. It is not something peculiar to a certain group of people (e.g., prisoners) and alien to another group (e.g., social workers or employees of the justice system). There is also no such thing as "expert knowledge about aggression" that could apply to everyone. Each person has his/her own aggressive thermostat and best learns to know and operate it themselves as well as possible. Moreover, each person also has the most knowledge of his/her context, sensitive strings, resources, ... This is why we choose to put **experiential expertise** first in every part of our operation and give it the leading role in the spaces, places and activities we organize, moderate and shape. Indeed, it is through being able to use **one's own expertise and freedom of choice** that a healthy relationship with one's own anger and aggression can emerge. In concrete terms, this means

- 1) that all facilitators who work for Touché use not only their professional expertise (e.g., in conducting therapeutic conversations, in teaching stillness techniques, in boxing training), but also their own experience in dealing with their own anger and aggression;
- 2) that all counselors of Touché are also and as much participants as the participants;
- 3) that the task of all facilitators is to let the participants in our activities (re)discover and deploy their own answers, resources, solutions, ....

Moreover, **for prison operations**, we choose to add **a second layer of expertise** based on where people live. In fact, we put together a mixed team of people from inside and outside the walls. Indeed, we chose to focus and graft resolutely and directly on the inmates, and to build an offer based on their questions and needs. So to make this possible, we need detainees in particular who embody this. People without detention experience may gain experience working in that context, but will never be able to fully know and understand what staying in detention means. Therefore, we choose to put the internal Touché team with detention experience in the driver's seat as much as possible and the external Touché team without detention experience in the second row as much as possible, supporting the former.

# 1 MELTING POT

Meanwhile, there are also a number of people in an "in-between group" who can provide a smooth connection between inside and outside. A number of Touché facilitators stayed in prison in the past and are now active as external facilitators, but have their past experience, and a number of other people were active in Touché's work for others outside the walls in the past and are now staying in prison again. These people are important bridge or key figures in the Touché team and for the participants in prison, because they represent important elements of reintegration after incarceration. Because the people still inside the walls have a more complex task to perform, having to do their job in the place where they also have to stay permanently, we pay a lot of attention and care to the training, coaching, intervision and support of their role. We do this both individually and collectively in group and divided by activity (e.g. talks / boxing / stillness) in which they take up a role.

We work not only with a mixed team of internal and external tutors, but also with a **diverse and varying team**. We choose this partly and first of all consciously, because freedom of choice is a key element in our operation and therefore we want to offer cooperation with different people who can all offer something different from the solution groups in our model. Variation in offerings as well as people to work with is important for stimulating freedom of choice. We also need to adapt to changes beyond our control (e.g. people changing jobs, transfers or release of internal colleagues). Besides the conscious choice for diversity and variation, we also strive for a form of **stability or carrying forces**, so that people can always opt for known and trusted contacts.

We choose to relate to participants as **people** rather than as categories or target groups, and to be guided by participants' **questions and desires** linked to **how they want to give aggression a place in the future** (rather than as a problematic, disposable thing from the past). To properly focus and maintain that entry and focus, we choose to question and track only that information that helps us do so. Conversely, we choose to do nothing with - and even guard against - information that would distract us from this or might cloud our focus. Therefore, for example, we deliberately do not ask for information from the legal files, consult as little as possible with referrers, ... And so we do not keep any specific information about the participants, other than who came to which session.

# 1 MELTING POT

**How people get signed up** makes no difference to us in how we get started, and is often not clear or multiple (e.g., someone indicates interest themselves, their cellmate catches that and passes it on to us, and the PSD signals the same). So this tracking is of no use to us. All those who want to look for a way to positively use anger, frustrations, aggression, are warmly welcome at Touché. Even those who are not necessarily eager to do so, but are expected to do so, are welcome. Everyone is welcome. The question and therefore not the profile of the person is central. Also, **status or age** plays no role in how we get started and does not affect the trajectory.

The participants' **link to aggression** is obvious to us (since we assume that we are all aggressive, because human), and so is their own when they apply or are applied. From where that question comes (e.g., committed acts, an incident, someone else's concern) is less interesting or useful to us than the answer to how they wish to give aggression a place in the present and future. With that, we get to work. Only if people themselves want to draw inspiration from the past (e.g. situations they dealt with in a way they would like to apply in the future), we include that in the process. Nor can we say anything about '**triggers for aggression**', simply because we don't gauge them. We are very interested in what is important enough for people to get angry about, what helps them find and maintain a good, useful, healthy aggressive temperature, and how they want to fight for what is important to them.

## WE LIKE TO KEEP IT SIMPLE

Over the years, we have begun to use fewer and especially different words when we talk about ourselves and our work, and we find that others talk about us in a different way as well. If we listen carefully to those words, our hearts make a leap of contentment, because today's Touché language seems to start much more from equal **difference as the norm, embracing people and making difference from faulty systems**. A few examples:

PREVIOUSLY	NOW
assistance, helping, guiding	doing things together, being each other's sparring partner, experimenting together
clients, therapists, counselors, inmates, youth, experiencers	people, companions, participants, groups, angerheroes, happy warriors, Soldiers of Love
aggression problems, difficulties, goals, reintegration	make colère shine cleanly in the world
verantwoordelijkheid, impact	humanistic, humane, pluralistic
partners in justice, welfare, youth services, ...	prefigurative, anarchist, radical, different, outside the existing, uncompromising, permanently new, idiosyncratic, separate from systems

This difference or evolution comes about because of **a number of conscious choices that often stemmed from a moment or period of dissonance**. A few examples:

- We register as little info as possible about people and do not attest or report on people to others.
- Everyone working at Touché earns the same regardless of job, degree, etc.
- We work without an application procedure, screening, file analysis, team meetings about clients, protocols, ...
- Everyone who works at Touché applies professional and personal experience and roles change regularly.
- Those who want information about Touché are invited to the same activities in the same way, at the same times, as those who sign up "for counseling."
- We don't work away anger, sometimes we even stir it up a bit.

That makes us **increasingly diverse, equal and thriving**. And that did not and does not always go without a fight. Because it clashes with just about everything we are used to. Some collaborations stopped because of it, we sometimes have fierce internal debates, we ourselves sometimes get a little tired of the umpteenth battle. It's not always pleasant and harmonious. But it's what we have to do, we believe. And meanwhile, we find non-harmonious even quite cozy.

## WE LIKE TO KEEP IT SIMPLE

Our basecamp is located in Ghent. There we welcome anyone who comes knocking on our door with his or her colère. The reason or origin of that knock on the door interests us less than the hope people bring, and how they imagine their future, proud selves. We do that **welcoming as warmly as possible**. We work without application procedures, waiting lists, inclusion or exclusion criteria, formalistic administrative procedures, impact measurements, files or other registration systems. We choose to put our main emphasis on doing useful things with people, and not with paper or data. After all, we discovered that that is what works. Trust, (self-)respect and freedom of choice are our tools. Anything that works against that, we keep out as much as possible. Inspired by all the beauty of and between people in our base camp in Ghent, we regularly throw a ball out into the wider world. Because it turns out that even on the other side of the world they can benefit from some positive aggressiveness.

Recognizing that anger and aggression are part of all of us is quite easy and feels logical to most people, but when people realize the consequences of this recognition (e.g. there is no such thing as "good" and "bad" people, I am violent sometimes too, punishing the "bad guys" and helping the "good guys" is not enough and does not even work, ...), it becomes more difficult. In fact, this already sometimes tangles with some **deep-rooted assumptions, beliefs and systems**. Aggression has a very bad reputation and is often used as a negative lever or power mechanism. We invite everyone to listen to its meaning, disguised wishes, good intentions, information about what you would want instead, ... To get there, we still have to overcome many misunderstandings, resistance, ... So our **pluralistic approach** is in a way a necessary condition to realize our mission, but at the same time it is a roadblock. However, we do not want to compromise on it, because it is the core of our existence.

Touché has a clear **independent position** in the landscape of justice, mental health care, government and other institutions or sectors. Participants very often indicated that this was crucial for them to be able to work with us in confidence. That is why this is a principle that we hold dear, want to protect with great care and sometimes already have to defend with a healthy dash of colère.

As a result, our **economic model** also continues to pose both a challenge and a blessing at the same time, as we continue to choose to address uncomfortable issues and we seek to establish a model that ensures solidarity, justice and "disobedience" to money as a tool of power.

## WE LIKE TO KEEP IT SIMPLE

While we are convinced of the universal and global nature of aggression and see the potential to turn it into a collective positive force, we choose **not to make our organization larger an sich**. This is the only way we can ensure that the organization continues to serve the mission rather than the other way around. We also chose not to engage (any longer) with ambitiously formulated large-scale impact goals, but to simply create impact by talking to people about their **small, daily, individual choices, ways of thinking and interactions**. When these become more positive and hopeful, people can create and seize opportunities both for themselves and for each other, and be empathetic and supportive, even and perhaps especially toward those who anger us. That choice is also reflected in the fact that we want to stay small as an organization, to maintain our appetite for change and curiosity about what actually works for people, and to put all our own angry energy into the core of our mission, rather than managing a large, or many organizations.

This also reflects one of our core values, beliefs or lessons, which is that **our role is to support others as they find their own best-fit solutions**. And that requires both a humble, non-knowing, curious attitude and a strong, supportive, collaborative, equal and reliable presence. Thus, we don't believe in champions, heroes or experts. Or rather, everyone is a champion. And we really need everyone to overcome our differences. The world will not be made better by celebrating a few champions. Once we all have our anger at the right temperature, we are all anger heroes. That's why Touché is an incubator nest where everyone is both a professional contributor or helper to others and an experience expert in using their anger positively.

*" Touché builds a strong community of solidarity  
between young and old, inmates and citizens, men and women, rich and poor, ...  
by bringing everyone together in channeling their own positive anger.  
Touché helps everyone channel anger in a positive way,  
empowering them to make their own choices.  
They bridge differences by normalizing, democratizing and solidifying dealing with anger  
instead of punishing, outsourcing or treating it away."*

## WE LIKE DIFFERENCES EVEN MORE

**Anger is a subject that not only affects us all, but that we all have in common.** We do differ in the relationship we have with our anger, whether and how we like to throw it out or rather swallow it, how comfortable we feel with it, ... This is the basis for all our conversations and activities.

We often bring people together in intentionally mixed groups of people with completely different backgrounds, ages, relationships with anger and violence, race, interests, ... Over the past year we were privileged to host **a colorful angry bunch of people**: all ages (the youngest was 11 and the oldest 79), genders, forms of anger (too much, too little, overwhelmingly loud, glacially quiet, gently squeaky, tolerated, strongly condemned, ...), from alone to supported or forcibly directed, ... In doing so, we see more and more the benefits of difference. For example, in the group discussions and boxing trainings, where often very motley societies come together, we notice that just being together, doing and searching with others who are completely different is what works and creates surprisingly beautiful scenes.

This is so for the participants, but also for those who work at Touché: we build our organization collectively with everyone involved, which is by definition a motley mishmash. In 2023, the Touché team consisted of a mix of therapists, boxing trainers, stillness practitioners and creators, assisted by a group of directors from equally diverse fields (construction, law, consulting, film directing, counseling, justice). We also choose to seek out as many **like-minded or complementary souls from all fields and sectors of society as possible**. Artists who can throw in some silliness, for example. Or philosophers by whom we want to be willingly filleted with their critical questions. At the same time, we really invite everyone to come and join Touché as a human being with his or her own anger, and to leave the role from which we came into contact with each other (referrer, donor, official, enroller, ...) at the front door. For example, we like to see people visit with their parents, and then we are equally curious about each person's relationship with their anger. Ditto for justice assistants or cabinet officers.

*" Touché's greatest achievement is to break down the impenetrable divisions between who is "inside" and who is "outside," between "therapists" and "clients, between 'payers' and 'beneficiaries', ..."*

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## WE LIKE DIFFERENCES EVEN MORE

Because of our love for difference, we had the honor of being 1 of 10 finalists for the **Global Pluralism Award 2023**. This award recognizes and celebrates individuals, organizations and governments of all nationalities who are actively shaping inclusive and diverse societies with positive responses to diversity.

*“The creativity, courage and dedication shown by this year's finalists is so important now”,* says Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General from the Global Centre for Pluralism. *“At a time when global polarisation is only increasing, it is important that we pay extra attention to the impact of pluralistic leaders who create communities that are inclusive, peaceful and where diversity is valued. I hope these examples encourage us all to do the same and take action.”*



For us, pluralism is creating contexts in which people who are super-different and might never meet can meet to explore their common ground, making differences not a problem but an enrichment. Pluralism makes differences positive.

We know that the world is categorised to make it more tangible, but in working with people, categorising is just harmful. That is why we deliberately do not use categories, welcome everyone warmly and approach everyone as a unique person. We believe that every individual, regardless of their current or past circumstances or experiences, has the potential to translate aggression positively and contribute to society with their unique skills, perspectives or just way of being.

# TOUCHÉ

# TOUCHÉ THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS

*“Touché's model is very inclusive,  
because it enables everyone to deal with anger  
and use it for the good of all.*

*The whole model is based on the empowerment of individuals  
from very different backgrounds  
and provides opportunities for everyone to develop individually and collectively.  
The training programmes promote respect, depth and understanding of each other  
to be part of society*

*and to "see" different perspectives and cultures.*

*The model is very clever because it adapts to each group  
to deal with anger and turn it into a positive force.*

*What I think is great is that it creates new roles for each of the people  
who are in vulnerable situations; to activate their power for change.*

*Touché shows that everyone can have the power  
to be part of the society and to contribute to a better place.*

*With your model, you activate this power and enable people  
to feel included, to be seen, to have a voice.*

*They also do this by bringing different people from very different backgrounds  
around the table, allowing everyone to learn and experience collective power.”*

*“Touché deliberately goes against the traditional as well as the modern norm of  
protocoloured work and embraces a work ethic of horizontality, interchangeable roles,  
equal pay for all, years in prison counting as professional knowledge, ...*

*This makes them unique, authentic and prefigurative.”*

*“Diversity often leads to misunderstanding due to a lack of knowledge of the other.*

*Misunderstanding often leads to tension and aggression.*

*Approach and embrace aggression positively and constructively*

*as we might, at best, embrace our differences*

*without judgement, blame or disapproval,*

*that is what Touché does.”*

# TOUCHÉ THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS

*“To live together harmoniously in diversity  
we need to reduce fear of people who are different and/or unfamiliar.  
Fear can generate anger, increasing misunderstanding and negative feelings.  
By using our aggressiveness in a positive way,  
we can take a step back, reduce negative emotions and fear  
and more readily accept a person who is different.  
We can then mutually build on our differences  
to create complementarity.  
And just that is what Touché does and offers.”*

*“Both me, you, Faruk, Ben, Els, ... may make his or her own choices  
and we help each other discover what choices are possible.  
I think that is the essence of Touché.”*

*“Touché manages to make difficult things simple.  
Everyone is welcome there and can grow at their own pace during self-chosen therapy  
and go out into the world a better person after each session.”*

*“I know of no other organisation  
that stands so unconditionally for, behind and alongside people.  
People do not have to go through complicated application procedures, screenings, file  
analyses, team meetings,...  
to be and remain welcome at Touché.  
This seems simple but it is not in this world.”*

# TOUCHÉ THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS

*“Whereas many organisations are made up of colleagues,  
Touché is made up of companions.*

*Thus, no distinction is made between the "all-knowing expert" or the "newcomer".*

*The aim is to make people each other's sparring partners,  
whenever and wherever people want.*

*Anger is in all of us, and that is what connects everyone within Touché.*

*From an experiential perspective, everyone tries to help each other.*

*Touché is a bottom-up, unconventional, democratic, independent  
and horizontally structured organisation  
that values equality very highly.*

*As an intern too, I earned my place as a 'comrade'  
and was immediately included in the group without question.*

*My 300-hour internship taught me more than I could ever get from my books.*

*It made me realise that there is a lot of beauty in the world  
at a time when the beauty in myself was momentarily lost.*

*Personally, my internship developed me into someone I really want to be.*

*It feels like the ideas of Touché have shaped me into how I am today.*

*I want to treat everyone equally, regardless of their story or background.*

*I have gained an appetite for change  
and am no longer angry at my own anger.*

*I have learned to deal with it constructively.”*

*“There is no other organisation I would trust so blindly.*

*I used to not trust any organisation, social worker, agency tout court.*

*Since I started working with Touché, fortunately this has changed.*

*They are and do what they say they are.”*

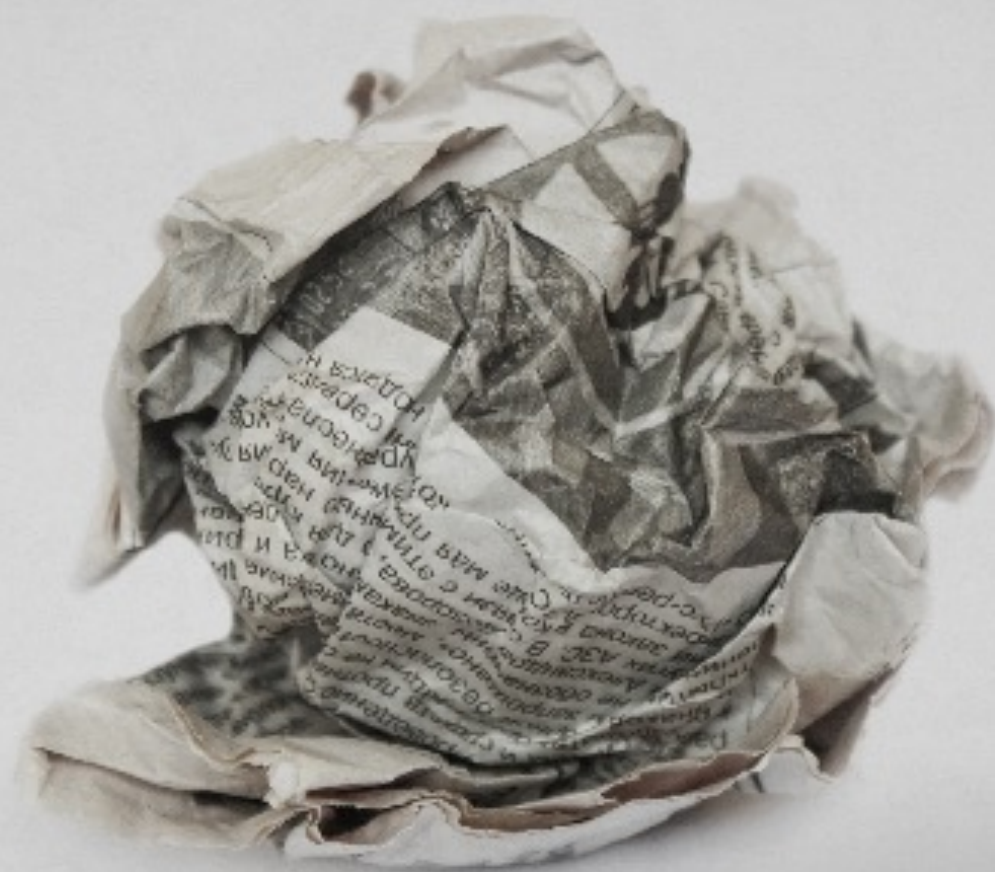
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## UP TO YOU NOW!

You, too, are angry. At least we hope so. For you and for us. It will become more necessary than ever to dare to make us angry enough too. And to do so especially loudly and constructively. If you would like to do that together, be warmly welcomed!

A warm thank you  
to Peter Lissens, Zephir Veys, Lieven Nollet and Ella Bessemans  
for the beautiful creative work in this report!

**TOUCHE**



## Maak van **opkroppen** niet de standaard

**TOUCHE**

Opgekropte woede leidt nergens naartoe. Opkroppen vergroot alleen de stress en kan zelfs ernstige fysieke klachten veroorzaken. Touché vzw helpt jou je woede kanaliseren. Naar sport of kunst of andere uitlaatkleppen. Jouw woede, jouw keuze. Alleen opkroppen is geen optie.