

WCPCG-2011

Art Therapy In Humanistic Psychiatry

Masoumeh Farokhi ^{a*}

^aDepartment Of Architecture , Toyserkan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Toyserkan 6581685184, Iran

Abstract

Without art imagining life as full and meaningful is impossible . Art-therapy is one of the new technologies in humanistic psychiatry. It mainly deals with a kind of treatment based on the use of artistic production. Art is creation, play, beauty, communication, and intuition . Artists express their emotional world through art, and the spectators or readers let this world pass through the realm of their sensuality. The true essence of art is in its perceptible and imaginary nature. Art can be pictured as the mirror of direct experience and feelings and sentiments of people. Images and symbols are considered the carriers of emotions and feelings. Through feelings, art deepens the inner world of a human being, inspires us and makes us humane, creates a 'personality' within a person. Creating a personality , art can solve pedagogical and psychological problems of human being . Moreover, art is a psycho-therapeutic remedy for a soul, a means of psychological and psychic relief. The object behind art-therapy is the human mind, that is, the emotional world of a human being, a human soul. Art can purify the sensual world (catharsis), and correct its orientation. Through art-therapy, psychical and psychological disorders can be diagnosed and cured.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of the 2nd World Conference on Psychology, Counselling and Guidance.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Humanistic Psychology;

1. Introduction

1.1. What is art?

Art is the product or process of deliberately arranging items (often with symbolic significance) in a way that influences and affects one or more of the senses, emotions, and intellect. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and modes of expression, including music, literature, film, photography, sculpture, and paintings. The meaning of art is explored in a branch of philosophy known as aesthetics, and even disciplines such as history and psychology analyze its relationship with humans and generations. Britannica Online defines *art* as "the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others." By this definition of the word, artistic works have existed for almost as long as humankind: from early pre-historic art to contemporary art; however, some theories restrict the concept to modern Western societies. The first and broadest sense of *art* is the one that has remained closest to the older Latin meaning, which roughly translates to "skill" or "craft." Artistic works may serve practical functions, in addition to their decorative value. Artworks can be defined by purposeful, creative interpretations of limitless concepts or ideas in order to communicate something to another person. Artworks can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted on the basis of images or objects. Art is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +98-939-694-8885.

E-mail address: sfgraph@gmail.com

through the senses. It is also an expression of an idea and it can take many different forms and serve many different purposes.

1.2 What is art therapy?

While people have been using the arts as a way to express, communicate and heal for thousands of years, art therapy only began to formalize during the mid 20th-century. Art therapy is a form of expressive therapy that uses art materials, such as paints, chalk and markers. Art therapy combines traditional psychotherapeutic theories and techniques with an understanding of the psychological aspects of the creative process, especially the affective properties of the different art materials. Art therapists have generated many specific definitions of art therapy, but most of them fall into one of two general categories. The first involves a belief in the inherent healing power of the creative process of art making. This view embraces the idea that the process of making art is therapeutic; this process is sometimes referred to as Art as Therapy. Art making is seen as an opportunity to express one's self imaginatively, authentically, and spontaneously, an experience that, over time, can lead to personal fulfilment, emotional reparation, and recovery.

The second definition of art therapy is based on the idea that art is a means of symbolic communication. This approach, often referred to as art psychotherapy, emphasizes the products—drawings, paintings, and other art expressions—as helpful in communicating issues, emotions, and conflicts. The art image becomes significant in enhancing verbal exchange between the person and the therapist and in achieving insight; resolving conflicts; solving problems; and formulating new perceptions that in turn lead to positive changes, growth, and healing. In reality, art as therapy and art psychotherapy are used together in varying degrees. In other words, art therapists feel that both the idea that art making can be a healing process and that art products communicate information relevant to therapy are important. Art Therapy is a process by which individuals can gain a clearer understanding of themselves by exploring difficult thoughts and feelings through the use of art materials.

Images can be a way of expressing thoughts and feelings that are not quite clear enough to be dealt with in words alone. It differs from other therapies in that it employs various art media; paint, clay, collage, etc., to facilitate the clients' expression and awareness of areas of their experience beyond the reach of words alone. The history The therapeutic value of Art has long been acknowledged in history. Many cultures have been aware of the healing virtues of art activities, whether these were individual/ group or cultural expressions. However, it was not until the turn of the century that Art Therapy emerged and developed as a profession in the post-war era in Britain and the U.S.A. Many of the pioneers of Art Therapy came from the field of art education and the psychoanalytic tradition and worked in sanatoriums, hospitals and schools starting in the late 1930's. They recorded their work and began to develop a language and literature of Art Therapy. Training courses were established that led to professional recognition by the NHS and DSS in the U.K. and similar status in the United States.

1.3 Art Therapy in treating illnesses

1.3.1 General illness

People always search for some escape from illness and it has been found that art is one of the more common methods. Art and the creative process can aid many illnesses (cancer, heart disease, influenza, etc.). People can escape the emotional effects of illness through art making and many creative methods. Hospitals have started studying the influence of arts on patient care and found that participants in art programs have better vitals and less complications sleeping. Artistic influence does not even need to be participation in a program but studies have found that a landscape picture in a hospital room had reduced need for narcotic pain killers and less time in recovery at the hospital.

Art therapists have conducted studies to understand why some cancer patients turned to art making as a coping mechanism and a tool to creating a positive identity outside of being a cancer patient. Women in the study participated in different art programs ranging from pottery and card making to drawing and painting. The programs

helped them regain an identity outside of having cancer, lessened emotional pain of their on-going fight with cancer, and also giving them hope for the future.

Studies have also shown how the emotional distress of cancer patients has been reduced through when utilizing the creative process. The women made drawings of themselves throughout the treatment process while also doing yoga and meditating; these actions combined helped to alleviate some symptoms .

1 .3. 2 The goals of art therapy

The purpose of art therapy is the same as any other psychotherapeutic modality: to improve or maintain mental health and emotional well-being. But whereas some of the other expressive therapies utilize the performing arts for expressive purposes, art therapy generally utilizes drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and other forms of visual art expression. For that reason art therapists are trained to recognize the nonverbal symbols and metaphors that are communicated within the creative process, symbols and metaphors which might be difficult to express in words or in other modalities. By helping their clients to discover what underlying thoughts and feelings are being communicated in the artwork and what it means to them, it is hoped that clients will not only gain insight and judgment, but perhaps develop a better understanding of themselves and the way they relate to the people around them. According to Malchiodi "Art making is seen as an opportunity to express one imaginatively, authentically, and spontaneously, an experience that, over time, can lead to personal fulfillment, emotional reparation, and transformation. The creative process can be a "health-enhancing and growth-producing experience."

Art therapy is used in many settings with many different client groups. It provides an alternative means of expression for individuals who have difficulty finding words to express themselves, e.g. children, adolescents, elderly, people with learning difficulties, people experiencing depression or other kinds of psychiatric conditions, to name some of the areas of application. In situations where words are not enough, art therapy provides a non-threatening, non-verbal, indirect means of expression whereby the person can explore difficult feelings and issues in the safe non- judgmental environment provided by the therapist. The role of art is valuable, especially for anyone who cannot easily articulate many of their own feelings and who need the safety of the medium before being able to express themselves more fully and directly.

1 .3 3 Music Therapy

Music Therapy is a predominantly non-verbal intervention using music and sound as a basis for interaction. It offers a secure space for self expression and development and allows a therapeutic relationship to develop. Interactive music is created by clients and therapist using a variety of instruments. The therapist may use an instrument or his/her voice to acknowledge and support the client's music. Music Therapy may be offered to people of all ages who have physical, learning, social or emotional difficulties, on an individual or group basis.

1 .3 . 4 Drama therapy

Drama therapy offers a variety of working methods that are applicable to a wide variety of clients. It can help the process of emotional growth through the development of trust, risk taking and the experience of different ways of being. The role of the Drama therapist is to provide a safe, supportive space to enable and encourage the client/s to express her/him in whatever way they are able. Drama therapist's work in a variety of settings including health, education, social and prison services, as well as in private practice. The playful and active approach makes it a very suitable intervention for adults and children with learning disabilities and autism.

The methods used in Drama therapy include spontaneous and dramatic play, drama games, mime, role-play, scripts, masks, myths, stories, metaphor and symbolism. A dramatic talent is not necessary for participation. The emphasis is not on performance but on the experience of the group or individual. The role of the Drama therapist is to develop a programme with appropriate aims, objectives and structures to meet the needs and abilities of the client/s.

1.3.5 Dance Therapy

Dance Therapy uses movement and dance creatively to help a person to further their emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration. This frees us to experience and express the full range of human emotion in a safe environment where feelings can be expressed, acknowledged and communicated. Dance Movement Therapy is founded on the principle that movement reflects an individual's pattern of thinking and feeling. Dance Movement Therapy is always guided by a trained Therapist.

1.4 Who are art therapists?

An art therapist may use a variety of art methods including drawing, painting, sculpture and collage with clients ranging from young children to the elderly. Clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, depression and other psychological issues can benefit from expressing themselves creatively. Hospitals, private mental health offices, schools and community organizations are all possible settings where art therapy services may be available. Art therapists choose materials and interventions appropriate to their clients' needs and design sessions to achieve therapeutic goals and objectives. They use the creative process to help their clients increase insight and judgment, cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, increase cognitive abilities, have better relationships with family and friends, and achieve greater self fulfilment. Many art therapists draw on images from resources such as ARAS (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism) to incorporate historical art and symbols into their work with patients. Depending on the state, province, or country, the term art therapist may be reserved for those that are professionals trained in both art and therapy and hold a master's degree in art therapy or a related field such as counselling or marriage and family therapy with an emphasis in art therapy. Other professionals, such as mental health counsellors, social workers, psychologists, and play therapists combine art therapy methods with basic psychological modalities to give treatment. Many art therapists in the US are licensed in one of the following fields: creative arts therapy, art therapy, professional counselling, mental health counselling, or marriage and family therapy.

1.5 What Does a Typical Art Therapy Session Look Like?

Mariachi (2006) provides an example of what an art therapy session involves and how it is different from an art class. "In most art therapy sessions, the focus is on your inner experience—your feelings, perceptions, and imagination. While art therapy may involve learning skills or art techniques, the emphasis is generally first on developing and expressing images that come from inside the person, rather than those he or she sees in the outside world. And while some traditional art classes may ask you to paint or draw from your imagination, in art therapy, your inner world of images, feelings, thoughts, and ideas are always of primary importance to the experience.

Therapy comes from the Greek word *therapeia*, which means 'to be attentive to.' This meaning underscores the art therapy process in two ways. In most cases, a skilled professional attends to the individual who is making the art. This person's guidance is key to the therapeutic process. This supportive relationship is necessary to guide the art-making experience and to help the individual find meaning through it along the way. The other important aspect is the attendance of the individual to his or her own personal process of making art and to giving the art product personal meaning—i.e. finding a story, description, or meaning for the art. Very few therapies depend as much on the active participation of the individual (p. 24)." In art therapy, the art therapist facilitates the person's exploration of both materials and narratives about art products created during a session.

2. Conclusion

Humans have been making art for thousands of years, and the basic tenant of art therapy is that making art is inherently empowering, healing, and cathartic. Art can be used to express a range of emotions, including emotions which may sometimes be difficult for the patient to articulate. By integrating art into a treatment program, an art

therapist hopes to elicit more information from the patient while helping the patient to get better. Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy which integrates the visual arts into treatment. Although people began researching the concept in the late 1900s, art therapy became a formal discipline in the 1940s, as a growing number of psychologists and other health care professionals realized that art could have a valuable place in psychiatric treatment. Art therapy is an effective treatment for persons experiencing developmental, medical, educational, and social or psychological impairment. A goal in art therapy is to improve or restore the client's functioning and his/her sense of personal well being. It is practiced in mental health, rehabilitation, medical, educational, and forensic settings with diverse client populations in individual, couples, family, and group therapy formats.

References

- Avraham, Y. (1998). *Behavioral and Cognitive therapy with children*. Presented in the Department of psychology, Tel Aviv University.
- Dally, T., et al. (1995). *Images of Art Therapy: New Developments in Theory and Practice*. Tavistock/ Routledge London.
- David, I. R. (2000). An exploration of the role of art as therapy in rehabilitation from traumatic brain injury. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B, The Sciences and Engineering*, (8-B), 3894.
- Henley, D. (1986). Emotional handicaps in low-functioning children: Art educational/art therapeutic interventions. *Arts in Psychotherapy*, 13, 35-44.
- Horovitz, E. (1981). Art therapy in arrested development of a pre-schooler. *Arts In Psychotherapy*, 8, 119-125.
- Landgarten .H.B –1981 - «Clinical Art Therapy» – New York : Brunner –Mazel
- Pleasant-Metcalf, A. & Rosal, M. (1997). *The use of art therapy to improve academic performance*. *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, Vol. 14(1).
- Saimon R.M –1997- «Symbolic Images in Art as Therapy» London – Routledge Wadson, H. (1980). *Art Psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons, NY.
- Wilson, L. (1977). Theory and practice of art therapy with the mentally retarded. *American Journal of Art Therapy*, 16, 87-97.