

Art therapy and trauma psychology essay



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Art therapy is a kind of psychotherapy that use arts their main technique of communications in order to improve the emotional and mental well being of the patients. It combines the areas of human developments, visual art such as drawing, sculpture, painting and other kinds of art and the artistic process with counselling and psychotherapy. Apart from mental illness such as anxiety, depression, phobia and trauma, they also address other issues such as substance abuse and other forms of addictions. Their clients also includes victims of abuse and domestic violence and people who have family and relationship issues, who experiences social and emotional difficulties connected to disability and illness, who have cognitive, neurological and psychosocial problems related to their medical issues (What is Art Therapy, 2013).

Clients who want to undergo art therapy do not have to be skilled in art because the art therapy is not concern about the outcomes of the arts that their clients made (The British Association of Art Therapists, 2011). The primary purpose of art therapist is to help their client to encourage positive change and personal growth using art materials within a safe and comfortable environment. In this kind of therapy, they consider relationship between the patient and client with high importance. However, this is not like other psychological therapies since it involves three way process between the patient, the therapist and the artefact/image. Therefore, it provides opportunity for expression and communication. This can be practically useful in supporting people such as children who encounters difficulty in expressing their feelings and thoughts verbally (The British Association of Art Therapists, 2011).

Art therapists usually have great understanding about art processes because of their sufficient knowledge and experiences in therapeutic practices and they usually work with people whether individually or by groups, for instance, adult mental health, learning disabilities, child family centers, prison service and palliative care (The British Association of Art Therapists, 2011). They usually work in a wide variety of settings such as: private practice; elder care centres; art facilities; correctional; clinics and hospital whether medical or psychiatric; out-patient mental health centers; halfway houses; residential treatment centers; shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence; schools, colleges and universities; residential treatment centers; non profit organizations and community agencies and sheltered workshops. They can work as a team with other medical professionals such as nurses, mental health counsellors, psychologists, physicians, marriage and family therapists, teachers and social workers. Together with other medical professionals, they will find out the needs of their patients and impose therapeutic objectives and goals. Sometimes they also work alone and sustain private practices with children, adults, teenagers, groups and/or families (What is Therapy, 2013).

Work of art therapist is often challenging and requires skills and degree of sensitivity and therefore, anyone who want to serve as art therapist must be flexible and mature enough. They should also finish first a Master's Degree within two years that involves theoretical and experiential work. They must also finish a first degree in art even though graduates of other courses are considered and some sufficient experience in health, social care and education (The British Association of Art Therapists, 2011).

History of Art Therapy

Visual expression has been employed for therapeutic purpose for a long time. On the other hand art therapy is not considered as a unique profession until the 1940s. During the early 20th century, psychiatrists focused their attention on the artworks produced by their patients who suffer from mental disease. During that time, teachers also discovered that children's art expressions shows developmental, emotional and cognitive growth. In 1950s, hospitals, rehabilitation agencies and clinics considered the use of art therapy programs together with talk therapies (What is Art Therapy, 2013). During that time art therapy was emphasized because they verified that art making can improve recovery, health and wellness of their patient. Consequently, as time passes by, the art therapy is recognized as effective and valuable method of communication, evaluation and treatments with children and adults in various settings. As of present, art therapy attracted considerable attention from medical field such as counselling, education, arts, psychology and psychiatry (What is Art Therapy, 2013).

Art Therapy for Children

Art therapy for children can give these youngsters an easier way of expressing themselves because children are usually artistic and creative. Young children are often more comfortable in expressing him/herself using crayons and markers such as communicating their feelings and emotions by means of writing some words that they understand and drawing images. It would be hard for children and intimidating for them to engage in therapy using question and answer format considering that they only understand

limited vocabulary. Because of the children's nature, art therapy for children can serve as a feasible means of communication, than simply communicating and talking about it. This is usually true for children who experienced traumatic events (How Art Therapy for Children Can Help, n. d.).

Treating Trauma in Children Using Art Therapy

In order to give more effective intervention in addressing trauma through art therapy, it is to recognize the complicatedness of chronic trauma throughout the lifespan of the patient. Most trauma specialists and other professionals meet children with a history of multiple chronic traumatic events throughout their lives. Before, this is called as “ complex trauma.” Sometimes, they are referred as Type II or even Type III trauma (Malchioldi, 2013). The reason why therapists and traumatic specialists need first to understand the complexities of trauma of their patient is because children who have experienced many traumatic events such as abuse, violence or abandonment tend to respond differently compared to those who have encountered acute, single incident of loss or trauma. Some organizations initiated steps towards identification and resolving issues in terms of diagnosing complex trauma. For example, children who experience a specific kind of trauma such as DTD usually encounter issues in terms of attachments and authority and often find hard to control their emotions and impulse. They may also experience problems in cognition and attention (Malchioldi, 2013).

Art therapy specifically the expressive arts therapy can be a great help for children who suffers from trauma. This fact is supported by the International

Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) since they provided a complete summary of how important creative art therapies in treating posttraumatic stress disorders. The summary highlights the increasing interests concerning the relationship between creative arts, therapies and the brain such as how human brain process traumatic incidences and the chances for reparation by means of music, movement, play and drama and art (Malchioldi, 2013).

Furthermore, expressive arts therapy provides a less provocative means of communication. The medium such as paper and crayons, or paper and water color serve as a bridge between the therapist and the client, enabling exploration and expression where patient feels more comfortable. The therapist selects the medium carefully to help children who suffer from trauma to express their experience (Mitchell, 2012). The therapists will not force the patient to draw the exact that they want to since any outcomes as presented in the medium can speak itself. This is because emotions are best express by means of art rather than through verbal language. Even though they may not be able to express what they feel into words, viewing their works would represent what they feel inside which can lead to making and implementing therapeutic solutions (Mitchell, 2012).

Art therapy also helps clients of all ages, whether adults or children, to undergo repression which is process where the brain will send difficult thoughts to the unconscious. Repression can support patients in handling trauma. Trauma victims often encounter difficulty in remembering disturbing events and art therapy can help trauma victims to remember them so that they can be healed and reconciled their dark past. This information is related to the explanation regarding the left-brain and right-brain theory which is a <https://assignbuster.com/art-therapy-and-trauma-psychology-essay/>

common knowledge for many people. The right brain is the creative expression and that same brain also stores visual memories. Many believes that perhaps because creative expression and visual memories are in the same part of the brain, it is not surprising why art therapy is an effective means of remembering repressed and unconscious memories (Mitchell, 2012).

Two kinds of art therapy such as Trauma-Informed Art Therapy and Trauma-Informed Expressive Arts Therapy combine neuroscience and neurodevelopment, mindfulness processes, resilience improvement and somatic techniques, employing art marking as the main approach. Trauma-Informed Art Therapy and Trauma-Informed Expressive Arts Therapy have five components. First one is that it employs an approach called Neuro sequential technique by means of expressive art therapies in order to make body response more stable (Malchioldi, 2013). Secondly, it involves identification of body responses to stressful incidents and memories by means of trauma-informed assessment and sensory-based activities utilizing expressive arts. The third one is it reacts to the body's responses to the traumatic incidents by means of somatic and sensory approaches towards self-control. Fourthly is it ensures the feeling of security and safety through using positive attachment and relaxation. Lastly, it creates strengths by means of art making in order to normalize and improve resilience (Malchioldi, 2013).

Conclusion

Art therapy is a kind of psychotherapy that use arts their main technique of communications in order to improve the emotional and mental well being of the patients. It combines the areas of human developments, visual art such as drawing, sculpture, painting and other kinds of art and the artistic process with counselling and psychotherapy. Clients who want to undergo art therapy do not have to be skilled in art because the art therapy is not concern about the outcomes of the arts that their clients made (The British Association of Art Therapists, 2011). The primary purpose of art therapist is to help their client to encourage positive change and personal growth using art materials within a safe and comfortable environment. In order to give more effective intervention in addressing trauma through art therapy, it is to recognize the complicatedness of chronic trauma throughout the lifespan of the patient. The reason why is because children who have experienced many traumatic events such as abuse, violence or abandonment tend to respond differently compared to those who have encountered acute, single incident of loss or trauma.