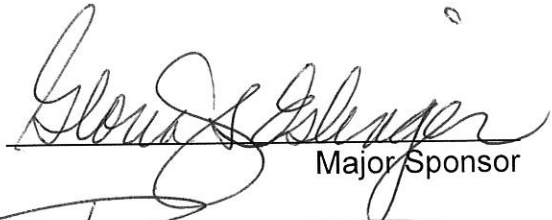


Art Therapy Aspects and Experience

By

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Art Therapy Aspects and Experience

Abstract; A review of several aspects of interest pertaining to Art therapy including terms Art therapy, Metaphors, experiencing Resistance, Nature based therapy, Chemical addiction recovery, Co-Occurring Disorder, Mindfulness mediation, Models of therapy, Positive Psychology and Flow. An account of intern experiences in group art therapy sessions at an inpatient drug and alcohol addiction rehabilitation facility. Advice to beginning Art therapists is interwoven throughout

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Acknowledgements,

This paper coming together into the life it is now has taken a long process of many years of learning, hard work, creation, adventures and reflections. Gathering wisdom in my education and being able to find insight into my own experiences I now proceed. Art therapy is my path the one that found me and I have chosen. I first heard about Art therapy during a discussion with a classmate in the fall with leaves blowing around in a brisk wind while at an Art symposium in Bemidji during my beginning years of community college. It made clear sense immediately and I decided that Art therapy is what I would do. As I continue, my own personal expansion carries on endlessly.

Appreciation for all of the people who help me to accomplish my goals are worth mentioning. My family, parents John and Kim Hanson they are the reason I am here now and never stop supporting me to find happiness. Jim Schwartzbauer is my partner who makes so much possible and loves me every step of the way. My teachers are Susan Loonsk and Gloria Eslinger who give so much of themselves, taking the time to go above and beyond what is required to be a good teacher. All of you inspire me to progress along this path.

Thank you,

Jennifer Hanson

Introduction

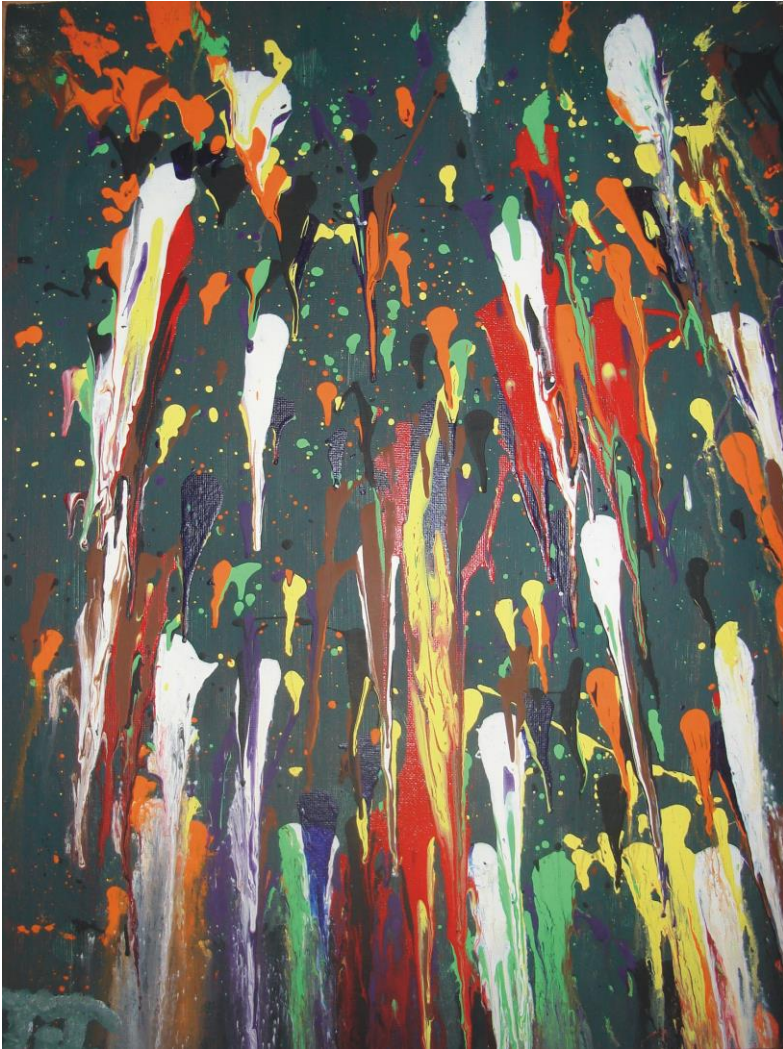
While the world of Art therapy is vast and expansive, some particularly relevant aspects of Art therapy are explored in this paper. The use of metaphor has been especially beneficial, Art and Earth have connection. Insight is provided from experience in creating a therapeutic atmosphere in a residential inpatient setting. Factors of resistance a common issue one faces in a therapy setting are discussed. There are helpful approaches provided to promote focus, such as mindfulness meditation practice prior to the Art therapy activities. The desired effect is an overall focused mindfulness allowing for freedom of individual spontaneity being present in the moment. Flow is an exciting possibility that is likely to occur during a creative art making session. Models of therapy impart rooted direction to the Art therapist. Positive Psychology brings new light to Psychology and into Art therapy as a result. Delicate matters of emotional expression and the release of repression are to be treated with compassion. After all the Art is the main component of Art therapy and all other aspects are complementary. The concept that art is healing rings true to the core. Creativity as a form of expression is alive and well in the hearts of Art therapists.



“A light in the darkness” Plaster sculpture by Gus a 22 year old at Human Resource Center

Into the mystery

There are times when a person paints with abundant energy and ends up with a massive brown because all the colors got mixed together. There is a need to isolate within the whole so colors can show through, vibrant in their respective hues. There is a similar need for people to isolate in solitude and be a connected part of the whole. We are all social critters at varying levels of connectedness. Deep rich inner workings need to come forth and be shared. Art work brings the inner out. It is the best method for making the unknown known. Dipping into the unconscious is taking little dives into the mystery if you will.



Tempura painting by a 22year old man at Human Recovery Center.

Art Therapy takes place individually and in groups both are very beneficial. As with all differences both have more and less desirable aspects. Ideally all recipients could have opportunities for both one on one with AT and group sessions.

Emotional expression

Emotions are very powerful within human psyche they are best addressed and expressed through creative art work. Frequently repressed emotions tend to find ways of expressing themselves either as a physical condition or behavior problems. An Art therapy session frequently includes an expanding of ones awareness in recovering material from the unconscious and perhaps interacting with it some.

Emotional expression is in the nature of art. We humans are not as hidden as we think we are. Once we connect with the art materials our true selves pour out, past events are recalled, old hurts uncovered. Being emotionally driven creatures we are directed by what we feel. It is inherently in our nature to express. When expression is hindered it is called repression. This can be dangerous to health and well-being if what is repressed is left uncovered.

The arts therapies can be seen, then, as a way to reflect, encounter and transform unconscious material that is part of a problematic situation for the client. The nature of the art experience and relationships within the arts therapies is seen to offer specific opportunities to the client. The arts products and process alike are seen to be a way to reflect and transform unconscious material. Jones (2005)

Using art as a means of emotional expression is a central root in the development of the Art Therapy field. Florence Cane underwent Jungian analysis and then came to

Walden School (developed by her sister Margaret Naumberg) in 1920 to teach art “At a time when most teaching of art meant instruction in skills toward realistic rendering as the goal, Cane realized the importance of the emotions as a source for creativity.....Cane developed methods to help free the child from defensive stereotypic drawing and painting. These included among others, the use of movement, sound, and the scribble technique, and had as their goal loosening defenses, evoking a type of free association, and tapping into fantasies and the unconscious.” Borowsky Junge (1994) p. 17

There is an interesting overlap of Buddhist thought in therapy. To see the suffering in life and learn to free oneself from suffering are major aspects of Buddhist wisdom Mruk and Hartzell (2003). The idea belongs to more than Buddhism it is human and it's even more than that it's all of nature. A vast amount of energy seems to go where the heart is so emotional pain can be a very heavy weight to carry. It is natural to avoid suffering. It is also our nature to heal there is a need for self-fulfillment. Further exploration of the meeting of Buddhism and Psychology is discussed in greater depth by Moacanin (2003) *The Essence of Jung's Psychology and Tibetan Buddhism; Western and Eastern Paths to the Heart.*

The Art therapist does her or his best to help clients find comfort in their own voices and means of self-expression;

The task of therapy is not eliminate suffering but to give a voice to it, to

find a form in which it can be expressed. Expression is itself transformation; this is the message that art brings. The therapist then would be an artist of the soul, working with sufferers to enable them to find the proper container for their pain, the form in which it would be embodied. Levine (1992) p.15

We are creatures of creativity continuously generating and constructing thoughts, feelings and ideas. It is our very nature to want to express oneself. The unheard, repressed, locked away heartaches create suffering. These are the weights of the subconscious. It is through expression such as in art therapy activities that hidden things are brought to light. The act of working with art materials in a therapeutic environment is healthful in and of itself. A place where one is safe and free to explore, express and discuss is a therapeutic environment. The art therapist is a professional at creating this space and accompanying the client through their journey in a session of Art Therapy.

The concept of repression comes from Freudian Psychoanalysis. Repression is seen as a pushing of the unacceptable out of consciousness into the unconscious. “Although individuals are unaware of unconscious material, it possesses energy and seeks expression.” Thombs (2006) p.127



Emotionally expressive portrait drawn by a man in his forties suffering with a co-occurring chemical addiction and bipolar disorder during his stay at Human Resource Center

Expressing emotions is a release from suffering. Art making is a basic uncomplicated means of expression that can encourage the unconscious release of repressed emotional material into the consciousness by the means of the artwork.

Substance Abuse Recovery Center

Internship was at Human Resource Center in Superior Wisconsin from 2006 until October of 2008. Human Resource Center was an inpatient substance abuse

rehabilitation center. Frequently residents at the rehabilitation center were simultaneously experiencing both addiction and mental health issues this is called a Co-Occurring disorder 'COD' or a Dual Diagnosis. The mental health diagnosis's commonly occurring within this population Borderline Personality disorder, Bi-polar Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress 'PTSD', Depression, Anxiety disorders and Schizophrenia. Although as an Art therapist it is not always necessary to know the diagnosis of your clients at times it can be helpful to be aware of how they are suffering.

While some clients sought treatment on their own will and came in voluntarily the majorities were in legal trouble and ordered there by the court. In order to get a reduced jail sentence some people check themselves into treatment prior to court hearing to gain favor with the judge. Others were sentenced jail time followed by treatment; they would be brought to the Human Resource Center directly from the jail. A group of local town people knew each other outside of the Human Resource Center as well. When Treatment is an alternative to jail time most do prefer treatment. Time at the Human Resource Center was seen as a step on their way to freedom

A variety of people came to stay for drug and alcohol treatment at the Human Resource Center. It was not uncommon for clients to return for repeated stays. Relapse is a tendency in the struggle for recovery. Thombs (2006) defines relapse as a "return to excessive alcohol and/or drug use following a period of sustained abstinence." This excessive use after sustained abstinence can be particularly dangerous and often times

leads to trouble either from overdose or behavior problems that end up back in the legal system.

Human Resource Center merged with Human Development Center Comprehensive Behavioral Healthcare on January 1, 2008. [humandevelopmentcenter.org /about-us](http://humandevelopmentcenter.org/about-us). Human Resource Center is no longer open as an inpatient facility.

Group Art Therapy

Creative space is made in an environment where it feels comfortable to safely create in a sense that people can be free to find the wisdom within their own individual selves. A therapeutic environment is where people can sort through their thoughts and feelings. Interaction and feedback are provided by the Art therapist who is in a sense solid in motion to lend ego strength and fluidly working with art materials continuing the activity of creation and processing. Time to process at the end of every session is important it ties up each session and gave time to share, to find insight upon reflection.

point. Following the Art Therapy activity fifteen to twenty minutes were spent on processing and sharing.

Healing happens in a safe place where pressure is suspended and insight is available. Sometimes it goes unspoken and that shouldn't matter an Art therapist is there in the service of other. There are many levels to everyone's awareness and energies it is the attempt of the Art therapist to keep a wide open view of the many elements within the group.

Castle Making

A creative challenge within the group can get everyone communicating and working together. Castle making is a particularly successful exercise for this. If the group is large split them into two groups. Limit the supplies to only newspaper, tape and scissors. Creative thinking is encouraged when faced with limitations. Give the directive to make a castle.



Many times this request to make a castle has been a challenge met with strong frustration and resistance. Life is struggle and so is the challenge to create something new out of limited material. This exercise is an opportunity for people to realize their potential capabilities. Once the initial resistance wears off someone begins and the others join in figuring out the plan, communicating ideas and doing their part in working together. Every castle making session eventually ended with all participants feeling like this was a successful group activity.

“This sucked in the beginning then it got pretty fun.” Abel commented on the project. During the session when one Jed got discouraged and stopped working the other Jed asked him “so is this how you’re going to give up on your sobriety when things get difficult.” The first Jed said “my sobriety means a whole lot more to me than some rolls of paper.” “They have a lot in common actually” the other Jed replied.

Intern Experience at Human Resource Center

Experiencing Resistance

Now and again in Art Therapy a big part of doing any activity is getting the clients to do the activity. Getting the clients to participate is a frequent challenge; an Art Therapist commonly faces resistance. Resistance is at so many levels a therapist must have a deep understanding of the variety of factors holding a client from fully participating in a project.

There is the initial uncooperative attitude some inpatients have towards their treatment in general. This defiant attitude can be their form of self-protection. The same thing that has gotten them as far as they’ve made it can be what is holding them back from further progress.

In situations where the client is particularly uncooperative don’t close the opportunity because it’s not irregular for them to be the ones who particularly benefit

from the therapy. “An important time to paint is when you resist it the most. The strength of the aversion means that there is something just beneath the surface, thinly disguised, ready to emerge. Resistance is a reminder to probe your inner fears and defenses.” Cassou and Cubley (1995) p. 107

It can be a genuine internal struggle taking the beginning steps into health and healing. Cassou and Cubley (1995) mentioned “Most of us resist the experience of true light as much as we do true darkness, because when true light arises in us it means change. Light burns away the false, and releases our grip on patterns and projections. In this sense, light is a destroyer and our sense of self-image fears it.”

In Psychodynamic counseling resistance is considered a defense mechanism. It’s a way of avoiding the uncovering of unconscious material that one is uncomfortable.

Moschini (2005)

Resistance usually seems to be a logical response on the part of the client. I trust that my reluctant client has developed a method of moving or stepping back from the therapeutic process in a way that has become a useful response; a response that serves a purpose within the therapeutic process and can be honored by the therapist, if the therapist can be honest about his or her agenda and expectations. Schroder (2005) p.36

The role of art therapist is not to guide but, to accompany. One cannot honestly bear witness if they are busy projecting themselves, it takes a well-balanced stability to be in the AT position. It helps if one can bring themselves to be fully present in the session.

The act of making art is incredible because it effectively provides a time for getting to know oneself as the unconscious material is expressed in visual form. Art creation can be an outlet for energies. Once a resident at Human Resource Center did not want to participate in a group session because she felt she was too angry. The Art Therapist encouraged her to just take a piece of paper and begin tearing it as a way to express her anger. After this action the client began to draw on a fresh piece. The physical sensation of rubbing colors of oil pastel onto a surface is involvement with the materials and often develops into more.

Since resistance is bound to happen in therapy it is advisable for the Art therapist to be prepared and aware of potential reasons for it. "Resistance is not an abnormal reaction, not something to criticize the client about, not something that should surprise or dismay a therapist. It is what people do. It is what therapists are paid to help clients work through. Helping them do so is one of the most important parts of our job." Erskine and Moursund (2004) p.151

Memories of feeling pressured to perform well in the past could be the reason a client refuses to cooperate. [Bev painted a tree and flowers. She told the group that her uncle used to be the art teacher over at East High School and she was always having art shoved down her throat. She often times mentions that she does not know how to draw and is not an artist. Perhaps it is her insecurities about high near perfect standards in work like that of her family members that are causing so much resistance with her.] Intern experience at Human Resource Center

“There are also aestheticians who write about an art which was condemned yesterday. In these books they remove the barriers over which art has most recently stepped and they set up new ones. They do not notice that they are erecting barriers a little further on. This process will go on until it is realized that the most advanced principle of aesthetics can never be of value to the future, but only to the past.” Kandinski (1912) p.31

As Kandinski articulately described sometimes our vision of what is art is narrow and needs broadening when it becomes too limiting. Thinking that things must continue to be done in the same way they have always been done is very constricting to creativity. In the history of art there have been a variety of movements taking place over time. It would be impractical to think that this growth is over and things will be stagnant.

Self-created limitations unnecessarily prevent art from being fully experienced as Highwater discussed,

People cannot get out of their own way; they often put a barrier between themselves and experience. This can be done by ideologues; it can be done by bureaucrats; it can be done by people who simply expect of art what they have already gotten from art- rather than expecting the unexpected. And people, who approach art with all kinds of preconceptions, whether political from the right or from the left- or moral or artistic, deprive themselves of the experience of art. Art cannot speak to those who are waiting to hear what they have already heard.

(1994) p.120

People become closed up as a protective measure in response to fear and anxieties which are also forms of fear. What we most need, doing the things that will bring us comfort and deep joy can be the things we put off doing the choice to become healthy is an attempt that takes commitment. There can be a painful sense of isolation holding someone back that is necessary for them to overcome to begin opening up and sharing.

“Depression and despair may sometimes precede creativity, but once begun, the process of release is like an increased force of water, strong enough to wash the accumulated debris of stress aside, restoring a natural flow of life-energy.” Lilly and Lilly (2002) p.39

There is a light hearted playful aspect to art therapy. Wanting to see ourselves as “responsible adults” it can be hard to open up to this aspect. At times clients are offended by the art supplies of markers, crayons and paint seeing them as “childish.”

Getting comfortable with the process of art making by interacting with the materials prior to any concern about product can help make art activities more inviting. Sometimes the Art therapist becomes a teacher demonstrating ways to work with materials. The Art therapist can ease this introduction by having a personal familiarity and history of experience with all of the art media used in the therapy sessions.

In the safety of the therapeutic environment the protective ego can be suspended. Self-expression begins when the atmosphere provides freedom to create, free from judgment and preconceived notions.

[The directive was given to tell something about them by visually conveying it on paper. It was requested that they not become too concerned with the formal appearance of their final product as much as it was desired to get a message across. This led to less reluctance of creating than had been seen in prior sessions. Nell said “art doesn’t have to make sense”. “Yes” the AT replied “I read somewhere before that art is in the middle of the known and unknown.” Nell appeared interested this was a beginning for her she is usually very defiant.] Intern experience at Human Resource Center

On the day when Nell, a frequent returning resident at the Human Resource Center, realized that art doesn't have to make sense she began drawing immediately. She first choose yellow and covered an entire paper with yellow then continued by making big circles each one a different color. As shown below.



Marker drawing by Nell on the day she opened up to making art.

All expression is a beginning to opening up even more. All productivity can lead to future productivity. At times a gentle nudge from the Art Therapist gets things moving along other days respect for boundaries is a must for trust to be established.

There are some activities that help with this beginning to open up from resistance. Keep it simple to start. Example; take one color chalk pastel and scribble. See what the mind sees developing in the scribble lines and draw it out with more colors. Chalk pastels are particularly helpful doing this because of the way they can be rubbed and

blended. When the blank page is daunting give it some shape pieces of driftwood lend themselves to suggestion.



Multi-media sculpture began with wood found on beach.

Time relaxing in nature fuels the inspiration. A particularly noteworthy project at Human Resource Center was taking the clients to the beach at Wisconsin Point. The group, along with the two AT went on a beach walk collecting pieces of driftwood to be painted in the next session. When the painting happened everyone was fully participating they were involved in the process and had fun. This experience contributed to continuing participation in Art Therapy and also developed a newfound appreciation for spending

time in nature. There are some clients who continued taking beach walks as a sober activity upon release from the treatment center.



All of the above images products of two part activity; beach walk and painting day by residents at Human Resource Center.

There are times when ignoring a resistant behavior to therapy is the most effective approach. Karen, a lady at the Human Resource Center began every Art therapy session she attended by announcing that she would not be participating because she didn't like art therapy because she thought it was stupid and unrelated to her sobriety. The therapist

found the best response was to do and say nothing. It was only an invitation to an argument that would disturb the group and keep things from getting started. Every session that her comments were ignored she eventually began working.

The dynamics within the group could be the reason people are not participating. A variety of aggressions, tension and irritations could possibly develop and build up between the residents at an inpatient facility. For example; there was a day at Human Resource Center when all of the women at the session were in an uproar of fighting amongst themselves in group. As soon as they would calm down the fighting would start again. Dynamics within the group can change by the time of the next Art Therapy session. It is most likely the other counselors are also experiencing the same issues. Don't be afraid to talk with a kind and more experienced colleague if you need advice. Discussing the difficulties experienced is most likely to produce new insight which could make a big difference.

When resistance happens in Art therapy sessions try to stay calm and consider what factors what may be causing it. The most reasonable advice is to reflect and try finding ways to move around it.

Harriet Wadson, a leading figure in the art therapy field, recognized that often times the clients in the sessions will not be as open to the experience as fellow open minded creative artists and art therapists. "Art therapists must recognize that it is a great

luxury to be able to work with highly motivated people eager to explore themselves and to find expression in art.” Wadeson (2000)

Creative blocks even come to professional artists and it takes a lot to make it through one to persevere and flourish creatively. Even or especially after moments of certain success expectations are raised and one can freeze up. Letting go of the pressures that seem like of the weight of the world takes some bravery. There are some excellent books written on this, a favorite author on the topic is Julia Cameron.

In *The Artist's Way* Julia Cameron (1992) describes things that keep us from creatively flourishing. She addresses several challenges that hold artists back from fully prospering. She found some habits to be helpful in overcoming creative blocks restoring the inner artist. Journaling three pages of free thoughts every morning what she calls writing ‘morning pages.’ Taking walks a particularly relaxing time of exercise to explore and let the mind unwind. Going on ‘artist dates’ on your own doing things and going places that feed inspiration. Keeping ‘crazy makers’ out of your life the people who consume all your energy into the negativity they create in your world leaving little mind left for creation.

Julia Cameron offers some helpful ideas but, there are multitudes of ways to be expressive whichever habits one chooses remember to keep awareness of personal health

and expression. As an Art Therapist taking care of your own inner artist must come first before you can help others uncover their own creative blocks.

Bridge Building

In a bridge building exercise using clay, paper, colored pencils the link to a brighter future can be demonstrated. The client is asked to draw a picture of their past and draw another of their hopes for the future. Then a bridge is created. In these sessions at Human Resource Center wet clay was used for the bridge building and then put back into a pile. No feasible plans for kiln firing and returning to clients in a timely fashion were possible. A bridge is a link to go from here to there. The treatment center itself could be seen as a bridge to a healthier lifestyle.

[Derek pressed an upward diagonal of clay and a person crawling up it only to be stopped by a straight line right in front of him. Then a little to the left is a ladder going up to where the line of the bridge continues. A man with open arms and a smile stands on the end of it. A blob in the upper right corner represents a sun. The sun is almost directly above the crawling man. At sharing he explained that before he had the chance but, not

the tools to get to where he's going. Now he is getting to a good place. He shared a lot about letting people down and just living too wild and crazy, out of control.]

Intern experience



Bridge building activity by 28 year old man at Human Resource Center



2-D and 3-D bridge project made by a client at the Human Resource Center demonstrating his unhealthy past on right bridging into hope for the future.

Implementing two dimensional designs with the three dimensional bridge building activity the group created drawings to represent time periods in their lives and created a bridge to get from one to the other.

The Art Therapist also did the exercise to encourage group participation. There is an edge to the Art therapist creating work along with clients in a therapy session. People like to see that the therapist is also doing the activity as it creates a comfortable

atmosphere. One must not get too involved in their own work when their attention needs to be on what is occurring throughout the group participants.

Creating art is a way the Art Therapist can communicate to the clients. Art therapists are experienced with artistic expression and can find ways to demonstrate ideas to client. “Art therapists have a powerful tool in using their own art to communicate with their clients” Wadeson (2000) p.74



Bridge project made by the Art therapist

[Jenny (the Art therapist) made a design of a red center encircled by black with some yellow surrounding it and then a lot more frazzled black in the lower left side of a paper. On the upper right side is a happy design with white light with bits of lime green spraying outward, purple polka dots, orange stars, blue squiggles and two red hearts. The

bridge in between is a clay woman in the bridge position with her feet in the red, yellow, black reaching her arms into the white light. At sharing time she told the group that the left corner was to represent being stuck in a small rural mindset that the world around her. It had seemed like she was trapped there just stuck. That was in past and now in the present here she was the one reaching out trying to back flip into a bright delightful warm future. If the back flip didn't work she would keep stretching. They talked a about how yoga is a very beneficial and healthy practice in life.] Intern experience at Human Resource Center

Mindfulness Meditation

Meditation for mindfulness and relaxation is a special aspect brought into the residential setting. It helped the clients prepare for their time in Art therapy to be able to switch from the daily routine into creativity and focus for their projects. Mindfulness has proven to be life enriching and helpful in many settings and particularly calming for many of the clients with addiction issues. Marlatt in Griffin (2010). Soon after the Art therapy department began practicing these meditations it was reported that other staff also started having meditation activities in their sessions as well.

Mindfulness meditation enhances what people call 'meta-cognition' the ability to stand back, observe what is happening and think about what you are doing rather

than being on automatic pilot. We're trying to promote approaches that will help people see their feeling and develop more of a sense of choice. It's when they're in the habit stimulus response that most people get into drug use and its consequences. Marlatt in Griffin (2010)

Interruptions by individual participants happened at times which disrupted the focus of the guided visualization. This was most often an attention seeking behavior. Participation in the meditation was optional although silence was required.

There is a faith based element in the twelve step model of Alcoholics Anonymous which requires a belief in a power greater than oneself. Various people find great comfort in religion during their time of recovery. A resident was concerned that practicing meditation was not a part of her religion. Although prayer itself can be meditative, meditation and mindfulness are not necessarily a religious practice.

“Mindfulness offers us an approach to living and an approach to therapy that can help us deepen our presence and our listening. While rooted in Buddhism, mindfulness does not require us to “be a Buddhist,” or to share Buddhist insights with our patients. Depending on our patients’ needs and our own style, we can do more or less of that. Since Buddhism teaches us to hold our opinions lightly----even our Buddhist ones----we can offer mindfulness simply and directly. We can offer mindfulness without religious or

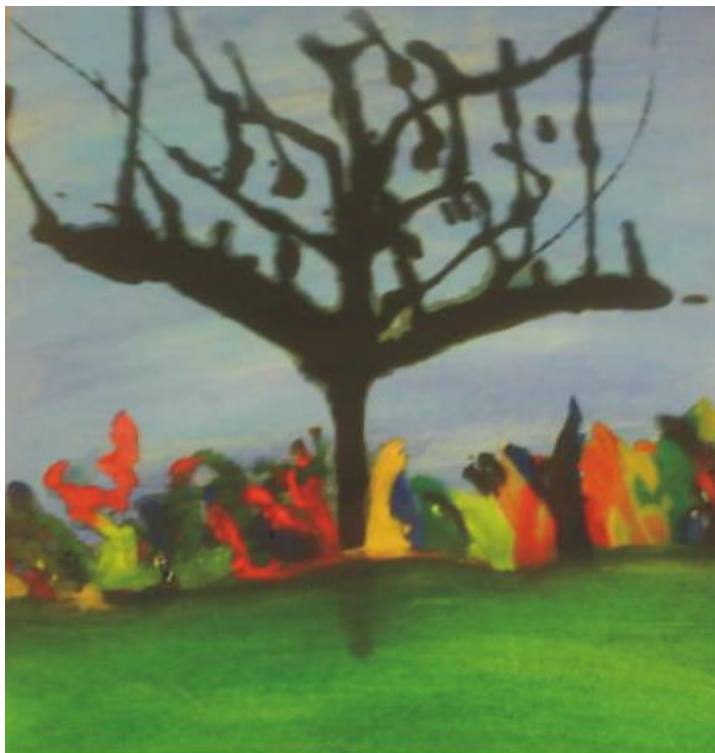
metaphysical assumptions, allowing us to talk comfortably with people of different religions or no religion at all.” Bien (2006)

In a reflective space we develop a witness. Being mindful is watching your thoughts this can be a life enhancing vehicle in mental health improvement and general quality of life. Learning to be mindful is centering. This watching of your own thoughts is an important life skill that can vastly improve quality of life and perhaps even help curb addiction issues.

Focus

Focus is part of being present for the session to help foster the ability to become immersed in the Art therapy. In order to promote focus distractions need to be limited. Disruptions such as new people coming and going, phone calls or fire alarms while the session is taking place can be enough to throw off the entire atmosphere. Art making can be a lively fun environment as long as focus on the activity is maintained. It's not a setting so strict that it halts the free flow of thoughts and ideas. There is a delicate edge to facilitate a group allowing freedom of expression and keeping on task to complete activity.

Acrylic Painting by a woman who was suffering from co-occurring mental illness and chemical dependency issues.



“Focused attention produces a richness of color, a depth of sensory experience, and often means the difference between seeing and not seeing.” Sewall (1995)

Metaphor in Nature

Metaphors can be exceptionally helpful in therapy they represent an idea. They can be invented or discovered and explored in the client's artwork. "Exploring metaphoric images can move the client to deeper levels of experiencing." (Kopp 1995) Nature based metaphors have been especially beneficial. There is much to learn from studying the grand design and workings of the natural universe, we can find ways to apply it to our understanding. As living beings taking part in the ecosystem of our planet it is impossible for humankind remove itself from the natural world. The real world is such a part of us that it is best to be able to cognitively identify with examples we can witness and relate to the rush of a waterfall, a blossoming flower, wind blowing through trees. A project that went over well with the groups at the drug and alcohol treatment center is draw/paint what would you be if you were a body of water.

Clients often interpret their works different from how I would. Sometimes this is difficult for me because I want my clients to understand my point and learn from my experience. But I recognize that in poking around for themselves in metaphors, clients often come up with understandings that are truer, deeper and more personally significant than anything I could have said. What people realize on their own from metaphors become truths they can harvest for themselves- not merely my truth, which they can passively accept or actively reject. Moon (2007)

John Lovelock a British scientist came up with the Gaia theory in the 70's after working for NASA he realized that the planet Earth is a self-contained system both organic and inorganic matter working together to promote the existence of a living mechanism. We are an inescapable part of this system. Lovelock (1979)

[He was coloring green and blue in an Earth like mandala he then got up to get a pen and made lines over some of the marker. He mentioned to the group only drinking bottled water. The entire group had a discussion on the cost of buying water. The AT told him he could filter water to get the chlorine and fluoride out. They talked about how unhealthy added chemicals are and how we all worry about water conditions. He said he worries a lot about the state of the Earth but, thinks it's only going to get worse no matter what. The loss of hope seemed to weigh him down. The AT realizes that the condition of the earth relates to the condition of his mental health. This is an underlying issue to all living beings although some are far more removed from this realization than others. In rebuilding a healthy connection to the Planet, we could rebuild relationships with our psyche. The health of the planet is weighing on our consciousness as a species.]

Intern Experience

Water is symbolic of emotion; it is a needed feature of life on Earth. It is not surprising that it very commonly appears in artwork, as all people have a personal relation to water being a requirement for life. Water is also appreciated for its reflective

qualities. Lakes, rivers and oceans are common vacation destinations so many people have vivid memories of special times near bodies of water. There are a myriad of qualities of water that act as metaphors for life; going by a fast moving stream, huge waves crushing you, still water runs deep.



Oil Pastel on paper drawn by a resident in his thirties who came to Human Recovery Center with some prior art experience

There is great potential for helping people help themselves with creation of personally insightful metaphor. Metaphors that let us closely identify ourselves with the natural world prove to be particularly poignant.

“Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things?” Emerson (1836)

Creative Flow

Creativity is an exciting aspect of being human. We practice this in the act of art making. When minds open connections are made and new ideas come flowing through. It is in this creative space that healing can take place. There have been beautiful times of growth during group art sessions in the times when everyone is comfortable and flowing freely enjoying and feeling pleased by what they are doing.

The creative force inside is not a dull scientific concept it is a lively, fruitful source of well-being. May (1975) p. 80, best described creativity “Something is born, comes into being something that did not exist before.”

The free flowing, timeless feeling that happens naturally during some art making sessions in therapy and in studio art work is called “flow” as described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Although this can happen during other activities as well, the creative action of art making easily guides one into a state of flow.

“Csikszentmihalyi (1991) conceptualized “flow” as a state of complete absorption in an activity that produces an altered sense of time and release of vital energy. He called it flow because so many of the artists he interviewed used the metaphor of a current of water to describe their optimal experience.” Kapitan (2013)

A reason flow happens during art making is we are always learning, developing and improving on our artistic skills, as we work challenges present themselves. Interest in what one is doing lends itself to focus and concentration. There has to be some interest which can wax and wane between sessions among participants in a residential facility and many other institutions.

In the Art therapist's planning of art activities the decision making process should include the skill level of clients should be considered when promoting a flow experience. The experience is naturally occurring and cannot be forced although it can be promoted. Research has been done to find what it is that invites the happening of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990)

“Some of the variables that have potential to promote flow in art therapy include the timing of interventions, the use of environmental elements such as music and lighting, and tasks that create a balance between skill and challenge” Chilton and Wilkinson (2013). This “balance between skill and challenge” is what Kapitan (2013) calls a sweet spot “In the sweet spot between challenge and skills, anxiety must achieve an optimal balance point for flow to materialize.”

10 Factors of Flow

1. Clear goals that while challenging are still attainable.
2. Strong concentration and focused attention.

3. The activity is intrinsically rewarding.
4. Feelings of serenity; a loss of feelings of self-consciousness.
5. Timelessness; a distorted sense of time; feeling so focused on the present that you lose track of time passing.
6. Immediate feedback.
7. Knowing the task is doable; a balance between skill level and the challenge presented.
8. Feelings of personal control over the situation and the outcome.
9. Lack of awareness of physical needs.
10. Complete focus on the activity itself.

Chilton and Wilkinson (2013)

A reason flow happens during art making is we are always learning, developing and improving on our artistic skills, as we work challenges present themselves. In an Art therapy session the challenge presented is the theme of the activity or directive and the artwork produced.

Interest in what one is doing lends itself to focus and concentration. There has to be some interest which can wax and wane between sessions among participants in a residential facility and many other institutions.

That balance between skill and challenge is always something to have in mind when developing and improving artistic skills. The tension of what you would like to do and what you can do creates the balance.

Models of Therapy

Philosophy changes the vision of how something is addressed. A change in the way of thinking reshapes actions taken. The term model is a theoretical base for how the therapy is gone about. The Moral Model and now the Medical Model Past are both models that have been used until eventually further knowledge eventually implemented the need to develop another one.

In the times of the Moral Model the prevailing thought on unordinary people whether they are physically disabled, struggling with drug/alcohol addiction or experiencing poor mental health was that they were bad sinful people who deserved to be punished by God. A child was born with an abnormality meant that parents had done something sinful according to this way of thinking.

“The gospel portrays Jesus as a wandering healer and exorcist. In those days of course the one naturally belonged to the other. In Judeo-Christian thinking, where there is disease there is *sin*- superficially considered as breaking the rules, profoundly

considered as alienation from the Divine Ground. Where there is disease, there are negative spiritual forces (demons) at work, and these must be driven out.

This point of view, pushed to extreme, creates the problem of blaming the victim. If disease is caused by sin, in the superficial sense of rule breaking, as such tortured logic would have it, they are sick through their own fault. We then have grounds to blame and ostracize the sick for being ill in the first place. Nor is this, unfortunately, simply a benighted ancient attitude. It is one that occurs frequently in our own time as well, sometimes behind the thinnest of veils.” Bien (2006)

Although we have officially moved out of this type of thinking it still occurs frequently. An example can be found in the image below.



Pastel by a man at Human Recovery Center himself portrayed as a devil.

The Medical Model is a big improvement from the prior Moral Model in many ways. It is science based on observation instead of auspicious thoughts. In the medical model addictions are treated as an illness and psychosis as a sickness. In mental health this developed a respect for the science of disorders and made some services able to be reimbursed by insurance. The person becomes a patient. The world around us is measured, tested and proven there is no room for imagination. The Medical Model shed light on the past but, still is lacking in a full scope of the picture.

Jung Provides described the limits of scientific understanding on humans as part of the medical model.

Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos. He is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional participation in natural events, which hitherto had a symbolic meaning for him. Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree means a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom, and no mountain still harbors a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants, and animals. He no longer has a bush-soul identifying him with a wild animal. His immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious.”

Jung (1971) P.p. 79-80

The Humanistic Movement began and rapidly picked up speed. Carl Rogers was this first to stop quit thinking of his customers as patients and developed Person Centered therapy. Carl Maslow started looking to the healthy the successful satisfied among us the ‘Self-actualizing’ and developed the Third Force of Psychology. Goble (1970)

A new model is developed from the shortcomings found in the past ones. It is inevitable that this will continue as our experiences broaden deepening our views. The

models that are popular now have to be able to be open to change with continued progress and improvement with the broadening scope of the humanities.

People argue about the relative merits of the various perspectives, most characteristically by pointing out the shortcomings of perspectives different from those one favors oneself. Such critiques can be productive but are only a step in a larger task: to develop broader perspectives that can productively incorporate the different useful insights reached from each of a variety of different points of view. Cykowski and Grobstein (2006)

Aspects of Expansion; Positive Psychology

Personal growth can be difficult, expanded awareness can mean seeing things one would rather not have to admit about oneself. It can be very painful to realize the shadow, to see your own downside. Expansion of the soul requires this acceptance of shadow. The term growing pains has truth to it. The evolution of the self requires growth. As we enter into this new paradigm both personally and collectively much of the old melts away behind us and still some truths carry on through. Even as we seek new framework the beginnings are within us. All developments in the interrelating fields of Art Therapy, Psychology and Counseling are always subject to future growth and expansion.

“Here and there are people with eyes that see, minds that correlate. They ask: “if the knowledge of the day before yesterday was overturned by that of yesterday, and that of yesterday by that of today, is it not possible that what we call knowledge now will be overturned by the knowledge of tomorrow?” And the bravest of them answer: “It’s possible.” Kandinski (1912) p.31

There is a fullness of shading and adding value to create a sphere. Art therapy is all encompassing of all thoughts and feeling in all walks of life, everything can be expressed even the unknown can be made known. The field of Art Therapy is a rich fertile ground full of possibility

Starting from a solid base of a theoretical framework is important in the practice of Art Therapy. It is the philosophy we subscribe to that shapes how a person lives their lives. One must be fluent in a number of approaches and yet be willing to abandon all knowledge base to work with a client at where they are at in the given space and time of a session. In order to be capable of being in a professional personal encounter such as mentioned one must be healthful, balanced and rooted.

Thomas Bien (2006) shared a metaphor of water and ice. “A living encounter is water, continually flowing, always ready to take new shape; knowledge is ice, hardened, fixed. Being mindful means allowing the ice of our knowledge to melt into the living

water of a personal encounter with another human being. It is only such an encounter that true healing, true therapy takes place.” P.p. 6-7

An Art therapist brings a great deal of proficiency to the session. The education in Art therapy consists of an in depth study of Psychology, Art History, Art Therapy and a proficiency in Studio Art classes. Although it is not required some Counseling is also helpful. Perhaps it is in the melding of these subjects by the individual that varying unique viewpoints are developed in the field.

A very interesting addition in the field of Psychology is Positive Psychology. Having its start in a variety of factors Positive psychology seemed to be a concept whose time had come to be realized. Maslow decided instead of focusing on what is wrong with a person let's look into what is right, the strength and resiliencies that carry people through difficult times. Goble (1970)

Positive Psychology is an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions. Research findings from positive psychology are intended to supplement, not remotely to replace, what is known about human suffering, weakness and disorder. The intent is to have a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience-the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between. We believe that a complete science and a complete practice of psychology should include an

understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their interaction, and validated interventions that both relieve suffering and increase happiness-two separable endeavors. Seligman et al. (2005)

Positive Psychology has an appreciation for the authentic self. Self-discovery is a key component in Art therapy practice providing an excellent space to find, explore and further develop a sense of authentic self.

The field of Art therapy is closely connected to the science of Psychology the level of this interaction varies among Art Therapists upon individual taste and style. Psychological and Counseling developments can be implemented into Art therapy because of the root connections. Gains in Positive Psychology can without doubt integrate into Art therapy practice.

Rollo May realized the benefit of creativity to health and wellness. “The creative process must be explored not as the product of sickness, but as representing the highest degree of emotional health, as the expression of the normal people in the act of actualizing themselves.” May (1975) p.40

Comprehending wholeness in our evolutionary growth we are all going to extremes searching for ways to be the best expression of our truest selves. This is what being healthy looks like. We are seekers of our own expression, we want to be fruitful,

and it's our time to blossom. One goes to therapy looking to grow by finding alternatives to maladaptive behaviors, seeking new ways to better experience life. Working on art gives the mind room to play around with ideas it is a safe place to try things out and see something of a visual result. In the therapeutic space of Art Therapy we uncover new ways to grow.

Therefore we are always discovering something new about ourselves.

Almost every year something new turns up which we did not know before.

We always think we are now at the end of our discoveries. We never are.

We go on discovering that we are this, that and other things, and

sometimes we have astounding experiences. That shows there is always

part of our personality which is still unconscious, which is still becoming;

we are unfinished; we are always growing and changing. Jung (1980)

p.21

The Art is the most important part of Art Therapy. Facilitating the creation of art is the joy and responsibility of the Art therapist. As an Art Therapist we are present to watch and encourage the creative process as it unfolds and smooth the progress of processing or meaning making of the artwork created.

“The production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity.”

Emerson (1836)

Art is the most important part.

In the sacred space of creation the precious most beautiful act is the connection the painter has with brush as an extension of oneself pouring the wonders on one's soul onto surface. It is in our co-ordination, fine motor skills how we use our tools to shape our materials and build our worlds.

The process is the act of actually doing; creating it brings discovery, health and well-being. The progress a person makes over a period of time is deep and substantial. Value must be put on oneself to take the time putting forth the effort for self-care.



Acrylic painting expressing the concept of water within the fire by a resident at Human Resource Center

What I have learned is to trust the art. You have a unique blend of knowledge that no one else in the room has. Trust the eloquence and the honesty of the art. Trust that you will move through the blank moments. Trust that the art will say what it needs to say. You might not have to say anything at all. And then go home and make your own art. Schroder (2005) p.100

Conclusion

Art therapy is rich in therapeutic benefits. Emotional expression and creativity of the individual provides a depth of healing unlike any other form of therapy. As former classmate Nathan Melis eloquently explained “There is always beauty in expression. I repeat; there is always beauty in expression.” Melis (2005)

In an ever expanding field filled with possibilities the aspects discussed; emotional expression as release of repressed materials, reflection on experiencing resistance, awareness of theory and the use of mindfulness meditation, focus, metaphor, nature, creative flow and Positive Psychology, appear fruitful in improving the Art therapy practice.

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