

Art as an Expressive Therapy for Adolescents

Haley R. Forslund

University Wisconsin-Superior

Spring Semester 2012

Table of Contents

I. Art as an Expressive Therapy	5
II. Different Mediums and Tools	7
III. Who uses Art Therapy	9
IV. Art Therapy as a good Technique for Adolescents	11
V. Group Therapy for Adolescents	14
VI. Art Therapy Activity “Bullying Mandala”	15
VII. Art Therapy Activity	
“Angry Bullseye and Positive Clay”	22
VIII. Art Therapy Activity “Magic Mirror”	27
IX. Art Therapy Activity “Inspirational Quilt”	30
X. Concluding Group Therapy	34
XI. Concluding with a Personal Touch	36

Acknowledgments

Throughout my studies being a Graduate Art Therapy student, I have had a tremendous support system. I would like to give a special thanks to my Mom, Dad and family for always standing behind me and supporting me in anyway they can. I have had amazing encouragement from my teachers, Susan Loonsk and Gloria Eslinger as well as my fellow students and friends Molly Thompson, Lacie West and Jon Petersburg, Thank you all for helping me complete my studies. Lastly, Lutheran Social Services- Homme Home's Director of Treatment, Shawne Judnick. Shawne opened up many doors for me by accepting me as an intern in Art Therapy for their treatment program. Art Therapy was new for everyone in the facility and without the help and encouragement from Shawne, there would be no Art Therapy program for Homme Home. Thank you so much for your encouragement, as well as persistence to help reach these adolescents in a new way.

Abstract

Nobody can imagine their life as full and beautiful without art. Art is beauty, play, creation, imagination, expression, inspiration and intuition. I believe that artists express their emotional world through creativity. Art is the center of feelings and emotions of a person coming out of many different life experiences. Art advances these life events, not necessarily for representing them, but for raising emotions to bring up feelings buried within a person's soul. Through feelings and emotions, art and creativity connects to the center of who we are as humans, inspires us and helps us preserve our sense of humanity, and further evolves our senses of who we are. I believe that art is a release and expansion of emotions and imagination that can help us therapeutically solve many issues that we as humans are faced with.

Art as an Expressive Therapy

Art as an expressive therapy is now becoming a popular topic in the medical fields today. Using the expressive arts to guide emotional healing, promote individual creativity, self exploration and resolve inner conflict is expanding fast throughout the world. Expressive art is now becoming widely used in therapy with children, adolescents and even adults in medical environments guided by art therapists, psychologists, social workers, counselors, nurses and other professionals. Art therapy combines both self-expression and creative process and reflection which makes it recognizable for its therapeutic role in helping individuals solve problems with stress, physical illness, and interventions among other things.

The terms expressive therapy or expressive arts therapy can generally be categorized with music therapy, art therapy, and dance therapy according to Art Therapist, Natalie Rogers. Dance therapy, music therapy and art therapy can also include therapeutic strategies through journal writing, poetry, meditation, imagery, and drama therapy. According to Sheree Sams, a School Counselor and Art & Expressive Therapist describes Art Therapy as a therapy that consumes art to explore feelings, thoughts and ideas, along with the interplay of communication where counselors and therapists embrace and witness, assert and listen, learn and grow, contain and imagine. Sams also says: “The power of creativity; of art, music, dance, drama, and play, provides insight and direction for navigating the human soul, wherein lies human potential” quoted in her article “Art and Expressive Therapy in Practice.”

What is expressive arts therapy? *“Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art*

products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others, cope with symptoms, stress and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art.” (American Art Therapy Association). Natalie Rogers describes expressive arts therapy as a therapy that uses various movements. Not only does it express art about painting and drawing, but it also entails sculpting, music, writing, sound, and improvisation, in a supportive setting (between therapist or counselor and client) to assist growth and healing process. It is a practice of finding and discovering ourselves, that comes from an emotional deepness, provided from any art form. It is in human nature to express inner feelings and thoughts by creating and displaying outer forms. Expressive art can also be referred to using the emotional and natural aspects of ourselves in many different media. Natalie Rogers says: “To use the arts expressively means going into our inner realms to discover feelings and to express them through visual art, movement, sound, writing, or drama.” She also implies that talking about our feelings after self expression is an important way to express ourselves in more depth and discover ourselves meaningfully. It is a process of discovering oneself through any art medium, and any art form that comes from emotional deepness. Creative expression helps guide individuals to let their feelings out and to be able to recognize the feelings that certain people are experiencing. It can be used as a teaching tool, a relaxing tool and introduce new ideas yourself, it can also guide you to finding a deeper meaning in life.

Different Mediums and Tools

Understanding art therapy and what it provides is important, but it is also important to select the right tools and mediums for the right groups of people. While I'm currently being schooled in Art Therapy, I combine play, drama and expressive arts therapy during my sessions. I am aware that certain circumstances and unique personalities will require different types of "art therapy" and different types of media as well. For instance, using play therapy for a puppet show made by the residents is using art, drama and play therapy. It also gives the individuals a sense of self, imagination and reality while working on their treatment plan.

Different mediums can provide different sensory experiences for some clients, for example, finger painting and oil pastels. Oil pastels are also good for clients who have been affected by traumatic experiences, due to it taking longer to cover a piece of paper with oil pastel rather than paint. Which in reality, it gives the client more time to express their feelings as they create art. Clay is a good medium to use when trying to redirect a client who is agitated, angry, or anxious so they can express their feelings in a healthy way towards the clay, or use the clay to help calm them. Clay enables a meaningful experience of creating something out of nothing and can be done and undone multiple times, which ultimately provides opportunity to easily change the clay sculpture. However, each individual is different and may prefer simple drawing rather than having to make color choices and mixing paint. For some, mixing paint and having to choose and make decisions can create anxiety and result with little or no therapeutic value. With children and adolescents, I have found all mediums useful, but have come to the realization that hands-on activities such as clay and collage seem to keep their minds more occupied and at ease.

Though art can be intimidating to many people, art therapy is not a restricted form of structure; it provides and opens up many doors of positive opportunities and experiences for a considerable variety of therapists and clients. Sometimes art may seem unusual and difficult to start, but so is learning how to play a sport or driving a car. It is typically because people are not used to communicating by using the ‘arts’. It is not just about fabricating a perfect piece of art, or even being an artist at all. Art therapy is a wonderful therapeutic technique to get past the wall that surrounds a troubled teenager, child or adult.

Who can use Art Therapy?

Using art as an expressive language is essentially for anyone. Art therapy can conquer different struggles from different types of people and help them overcome their troubles in a therapeutic way. It can be used for counseling by therapists and counselors, healing treatment, rehabilitation, and psychotherapy among many more. Expressive therapy is used more often than what one may think. Author Natalie Rogers expresses in her book *“The Creative Connection”* that most of the population has already discovered some aspect of expressive art being helpful in our daily lives on a regular basis. For example she says: *“Some people doodle while they are on the phone or taking notes and discover it calming and comforting. When people create online journals and blogs, and creative writing, some people find that their feelings and ideas change as you become more mindful of what you are writing down. It’s as simple as singing in your car and calming yourself, it’s all different forms of expression. These things represent self-expression throughout sound, movement, writing and art to change your state of being. All of these examples are ways to release your feelings, calm yourself, clear your thoughts and raise*

your self confidence, and bring yourself to a higher state of consciousness.”(Rogers, 10).

Through all of this, the process is a therapeutic journey for individuals. Art Therapy is used anywhere from hospitals, jails, juvenile detention, rehab facilities, schools, and nursing homes. Typically the populations are anyone and every one of all ages, sex, and races. Art Therapists can help an individual, families, couples and even groups of people with similar life troubles. Depending on the situation and circumstances, there may be a team of therapists and counselors working together as a clinical team. Art Therapists are trained in art and psychology and schooled and trained to be able to pick up on metaphors and nonverbal symbols and objects in art. While I am experiencing the joy of being a schooled Art Therapist, I have been using my knowledge and skills in the juvenile adolescent population and have virtually found it very rewarding and strengthening for this age category.

Why is Art Therapy a good technique of communication for the adolescent years?

In the stages of Adolescence, there are many changes throughout the human body. Adolescence is a transitional period of the body from youth and puberty to maturity. Not only does the body change physically, but mentally as well. It is common during adolescent stages for them to experience dramatic change in behavior towards their peers, adults, authoritative figures and especially their parents. A good reason for this is that they are starting to separate themselves from their parents and naturally become more independent. Around this time, adolescents are more aware of their own surroundings and other teens their age, and are desperately trying to fit in.

By taking my beliefs and deep rooted feelings that I have for art, I have found, and combined it with my compassion for helping people to be the center of who I am, and my greatest passion. I have chosen to complete my Art Therapy internship at Lutheran Social Service Homme Youth and Family Programs. Homme Home is a nationally known treatment facility that has been committed to treating children and adolescents dealing with issues of sexual perpetration, delinquency, victimization, alcohol and drug abuse, cognitive behavioral issues, and independent living support. (<http://www.lsswis.org/Services/CF/Homme>). Introducing these adolescents to Art Therapy has greatly had an impact on their lives as well as my own. Art Therapy has helped these adolescents see the world through different eyes and has given them hope and courage through their treatment process. Through this facility, I have learned how to work with and interact with a diversity of children and adolescents who are struggling with everyday life functions and more of being a teenager. It is known that doctors usually treat the physical problems and aspects of these teens, but are often struggling with trying to find a “therapeutic treatment” for this age category. Adolescents, more often than not, crave more original and modernized ways to express themselves than through ‘talk therapy.’ As they mature, there is a want and an impulse to find themselves and who they are as an individual. Art as an expressive language helps guide adolescents into self discovery and communicate difficult feelings and thoughts through different art mediums. It can also be used in assisting in problem solving, building social skills, behavioral management and increasing self-esteem. Art, as a communication can provide a lead into a relationship with teens by digging into their creativity and expanding a form of communication that is nonthreatening and where the adolescent has control over the situation. During my clinical intern work at Lutheran Social Services-Homme Home, I have learned and respected each resident’s abilities to express their emotions in both

nonverbal and verbal ways. One of the greatest struggles for these adolescents is their hostility to authoritative figures and downfall of trust in the 'adult' population. I have learned first handedly through my internship work, the struggles to build a therapeutic relationship and still maintaining proper boundaries with these adolescents, who have little to no trust in the adult world. As adolescents mature and develop, they gain the ability to understand abstract ideas and to form judgments (Riley, 55). Art therapy as a therapeutic tool encourages these teens to express themselves and feel open about what is really going on in their lives. In Shirley Riley's book: Contemporary Art Therapy with Adolescents, she expresses that: "*Adolescents want to let others know how 'screwed up' they find the world, but they do not trust enough to use words. They can more comfortably employ the silent form of communication through images. As long as they are not pressed to talk, paradoxically, they will. The art form is safe and under their control.*" (Riley, 57.)

Using art as an expressive language helps guide adolescents' into self discovery and use different forms of communication to express difficult feelings and thoughts through different art mediums. Artwork and other mediums such as dance and play, become a plan that can bring up discussion and develop the possibilities for insight from peers and adults. It can also be used in assisting in problem solving, building social skills, behavioral management and increasing self-esteem. Art, as a language can provide a lead into a relationship with teens by digging into their creativity and expanding a form of communication that is nonthreatening and where the adolescent has control over the situation. When teens are welcomed to an art therapy room, there are materials available to what they would prefer to use which enables them to draw anything they choose, and even make a statement in images that represents who they are or what they are going through in their treatment process. Every treatment has a plan and art therapy

can help adolescents map their therapeutic journey from beginning to end, helping them see how they have progressed.

Group Therapy for Adolescents

Many therapists and counselors work in groups where there is no particular starting or ending point and they always welcome new members. Majority of adolescents are being transferred to group therapy because of difficulty with interpersonal relationships between peers, parents, and teachers (authority figures). Teenagers work well in groups, simply being that they are used to being in groups. They are introduced to groups in school, social groups such as friends, and even sports. Thus, group therapy is a familiar setting and most teens find it a safe and familiar atmosphere. For my internship at Homme Home through Lutheran Social Services, I have learned that group therapy is rewarding to see struggling teens work together in groups as it helps their social skills and developing team work strategies (which is something these adolescents really struggle with). The art that adolescents construct can help the therapist or counselor obtain some insight on the teens life and concerns, especially situations where they (teens) feel that it is too risky or embarrassing to reveal verbally.

Art Therapy Activity 1

“Bullying Mandala”

Brainstorm with your team to fill out poster board. On one side of the poster board come up with examples for “How do people bully” and on the other side write down how it affects you

as an individual-whether you are doing the bullying tactics, or the victim. After brainstorming is completed and processed, create art work on a pie piece for the mandala on a bullying experience you have had (whether you were victim, bully or someone close to you that was being bullied). Clients were directed to write a personal story of bullying on one side of their pie piece, and on the other make a picture of an experience that they had with bullying.

Goals

The goals to this activity have been designed to help the female residents be able to understand and recognize bullying tactics. Along with understanding what bullying is, it is also important for them to understand and recognize feelings of empathy, and be more assertive in their milieu by asking for help. Even though bullying happens most of the time on the milieu, it is also important to be able to recognize it at school.

Overview of Session with “Bullying Mandala”

Therapist and staff set up materials for residents and put the residents into groups. Residents were resistant to start due to the grouping. Therapists and staff expressed to the residents that group rules still applied even though it was a different kind of therapy for the day and instructed the residents to brainstorm together and work as a team to come up with examples for bullying. Residents all worked well while gathering ideas as a team. Conflict had risen between Kibby and Dominique over who was going to be the leader of the group. Kibby ignored Dominique’s negative comments and therapist and staff redirected Dominique to what the group is all about. After the teams filled out both front and back of the poster board, the teams processed verbally and expressed the ideas they came up with for “how people bully” and “how it makes you feel.” Each group came up with numerous answers for both sides and therapist

expressed that all answers were very good and that it was interesting that there wasn't much repetition happening. After processing, therapist and staff directed the group to take their piece of the mandala and to make an art work about an experience they have had with bullying- whether they were being bullied, the victim, or an incident that happened to someone close to them. During this part of the session, Dominique refused to take part in this activity. Staff and therapist redirected Dominique but still took no part. Danielle started to make bullying threats to two other residents (Kibby and Victoria) and resident's reminded Danielle that she was using bullying tactics against them. During processing, Jazmine expressed herself verbally presenting "why you shouldn't listen to bully's" and mentioned that everyone in the group is worth much more than letting someone put you down. Victoria explained that bullying was a sensitive subject to her because her sister had attempted suicide due to cyber bullying and admitted that she has taken part in bullying on the unit, but would work at stopping these tactics. While the group was sharing, Tricia showed resistance by sitting with her arms crossed and rolling her eyes. Staff reminded Tricia of the times she has bullied on the unit and that it was very important for her to hear every one's feelings. Tricia would acknowledge staff, but then would go right back to showing resistance and hesitation. The residents asked if staff would share their pieces as well and staff agreed. After staff shared all their art work, residents showed feelings of empathy by communicating verbally and giving comments on staff and therapists experience with bullying. Residents showed a better understanding of feeling bullied and being the bully-by hearing authoritative figures expressing their thoughts and experiences with bullying.

Reaction

This activity was successful for most of the female residents. By having the authoritative figures along with their peers expressing their personal experiences with bullying, the female

This activity was also successful with having the female residents work together in groups. Even

though there were struggles, they were able to problem solve and work successfully together.



Image 1:“Bullying Mandala” completed by female residents at Homme Home.

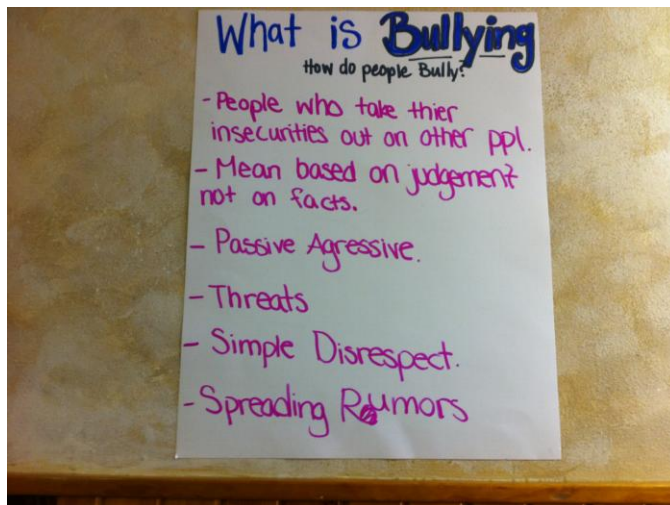


Image 2: “What is bullying?” made by female residents at Homme Home.

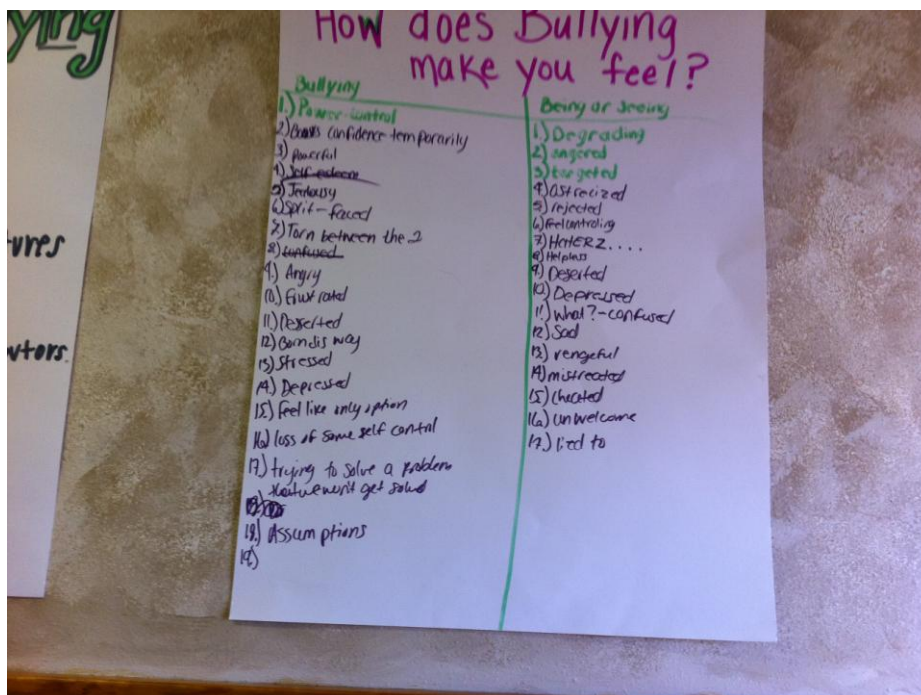


Image 3: “How does Bullying make you feel?” Group work done by female residents at Homme Home.

Since art therapy is a new form of therapy to Homme Home, a team of therapists (myself included) decided to designate a particular room for Art designed by certain individuals participating in the Homme Youth and Families Program. Together, in a group setting, we created a wall mural to represent what is expected during group therapy and created a room representing unison. The residents used their own creativity, social skills, team work, and practiced boundaries with one another while creating art.



Image 4: “Wall Mural” - Designed by Haley R. Forslund and painted by Residents at Homme Home, using group work.

In the book “Art Therapy for Groups” by Marian Liebmann, she expresses these reasons for taking a closer look at group work: 1.) Much of social learning is done in groups 2.) People

with similar needs can provide mutual support for each other, and help with mutual problem solving 3.) Group members can learn from the feedback from other members 4.) Group members can try new roles, from seeing how others react (role-modeling), and can be supported and reinforced in this 5.) Groups are more suitable for certain individuals, example: those who find the intimacy of individual work too intense 6.) Groups can be more liberated, sharing the power of learning and responsibility 7.) Some therapists/counselors find group work more satisfying than individual work (“Art Therapy for Groups”). All of these reasons have affected my opinion on group therapy at my internship site. It is theorized that adolescents learn by each other and watching each other interact, which is another benefit of group therapy and help with these struggles with interpersonal skills. The group setting seems to help with practicing all of these skills and at the same time, providing a safe space for the adolescent.

However, all of these reasons are good but not everyone may be able to attend group therapy. The disadvantages that Liebmann explains and that I have found to be difficult for group therapy are as follows: 1.) Confidentiality is more difficult when more people are involved 2.) Groups need resources and can sometimes be difficult to organize 3.) Less individual attention is available to members during group therapy 4.) A group may be easily labeled. Liebmann also points out in her opinion that there are four continuum possibilities for work in Art Therapy groups that are as follows: always structured, usually structured, usually unstructured and always unstructured. Meaning: that always structured entails having a specific group task with a common purpose and unstructured meaning that the group meets together, but everyone does their own thing and works on their own therapeutic journey. However, working in a “structured” way can imply many different things. For example, you could let clients “do their own thing” but have a similar theme like giving the directive to “start with a scribble and

see if it turns into anything.” I have learned that with the group(s) of adolescents that I intern with, it is easier to stay more on the structured side of group therapy. Many of the residents I work with have a hard time starting a creative journey without a focal point or theme to begin, and giving them a theme also gives them a better understanding of art therapy and its usefulness.

Art Therapy Activity 2

Nelson Hall (an example of when group therapy should not be applied).

Angry Bullseye and Positive Clay

Draw out a bullseye on construction paper and label it with angry thoughts, feelings, emotions and anything that is creating a “negative energy” in your life at the present time. After the bullseye is completed, use the second half of group to create something positive out of your clay. (example: what is something that creates “positive energy” in your life? Sports, home, music?) When the residents are done sculpting their “positive clay” lay the bullseye on the ground and throw the clay at the bullseye. The goal is to cover the negative energy with positive energy.

Goals

The goals to this activity were designed for the younger male residents at Homme Home to be able to enhance their coping skills, and work together successfully in groups while releasing their anger in a positive manner. This activity should be able to guide the residents to be able to recognize what makes them angry and be able to have a positive outlook on situations like this.

Overview of Session with “Angry Bullseye and Positive Clay”

Therapist gave the residents the directive to the bullseye and explained what words are appropriate and what words are inappropriate for the activity. Residents already had tension between each other due to previous incidents. While residents were getting situated for the activity, one resident was sitting in another's seat and got upset. Deon was sitting in Angel's seating arrangement and asked him to move and when refused, Angel pushed a chair at Deon and created a physical altercation. Deon attempted to punch Angel but Staff and Therapist separated the residents before any harm was done. Therapist and staff then took Deon and Angel into their rooms and redirected their behavior. Resident's then came back to group and sat on opposite ends of the room. While all residents were working on the "bullseye" part of the activity, therapist and staff offered help to residents who were struggling with behavior and creativity blocks. Nathan, a resident, did not want to put any words of anger in his bullseye because he implied that he was in fear he would get "beat up" if the other residents saw what he was writing. Therapist asked Nathan if he would like to sit by himself and he responded with "no". Nathan then expressed by communicating that he didn't get along with "blacks" and that's what made him angry. Therapist mentioned again that if he did not want others to see, to cover it up with another sheet of paper. Residents Noah, Armon, and Angel started to verbally bully others by using terms such as "fags" and starting talking about "your mom". Therapist directed residents that if they could be silent for 3 minutes, they could go outside to throw their clay later. During the 3 minutes, all clients were silent except for Armon, and Angel who were continually trying to hold back laughter. Therapist redirected to being quiet so that everyone could go outside. After 3 minutes were up, therapist and staff handed out pieces of clay to residents to sculpt out something positive. Therapist and staff reminded residents that they were to only sculpt things that were appropriate and if they were to sculpt inappropriate things that the clay would get taken

away. Noah sculpted a penis shaped object right away and when therapist asked what he was sculpting and if it was appropriate, he responded verbally: "it's not a dick". Therapist and staff redirected Noah to only make things that were appropriate and gave examples such as sports, and music and other object forms that were considered "positive". Noah continually laughed and implied that he was making something positive. When confronted again, Noah started to swear and use inappropriate language. Therapist and staff redirected resident to use appropriate language.

Resident Nathan was still struggling with what he wanted to sculpt, and therapist mentioned something sports related. Nathan then sculpted a picture with a tree and he communicated that it was something positive that he looks forward to. While Nathan was showing therapist and staff what he was making with the clay, David took Nathan's bullseye to see what he wrote on there for "angry words". David expressed to the rest of the group members that Nathan had written "blacks" in his bullseye. All of the residents started to use bully mechanisms towards Nathan and Nathan threatened David with his actions. After this incident, Therapists and staff concluded that the residents will not be going outside due to everyone's behavior. Residents started to show expression of anger because of this situation and staff and therapist directed residents to throw their clay on their bullseye on the floor. While residents were throwing the clay (under staff supervision), therapist took Deon outside to throw his clay because of his good behavior. Residents started to get out of control with the clay and throwing it at the ceiling and carpet, so the activity was concluded by therapist and staff. Residents were directed to go to their rooms while staff cleaned up. Deon, RJ and Abe helped with staff and therapist to clean up.

Reaction

This activity was unsuccessful for most of the young male residents who participated. Clay is a medium that should only be used in certain situations, and due to the atmosphere of the unit at the time, clay was not an appropriate medium for the residents to use. Due to the environment at the unit, an activity that would provide unison and empathy would be more appropriate for these residents.

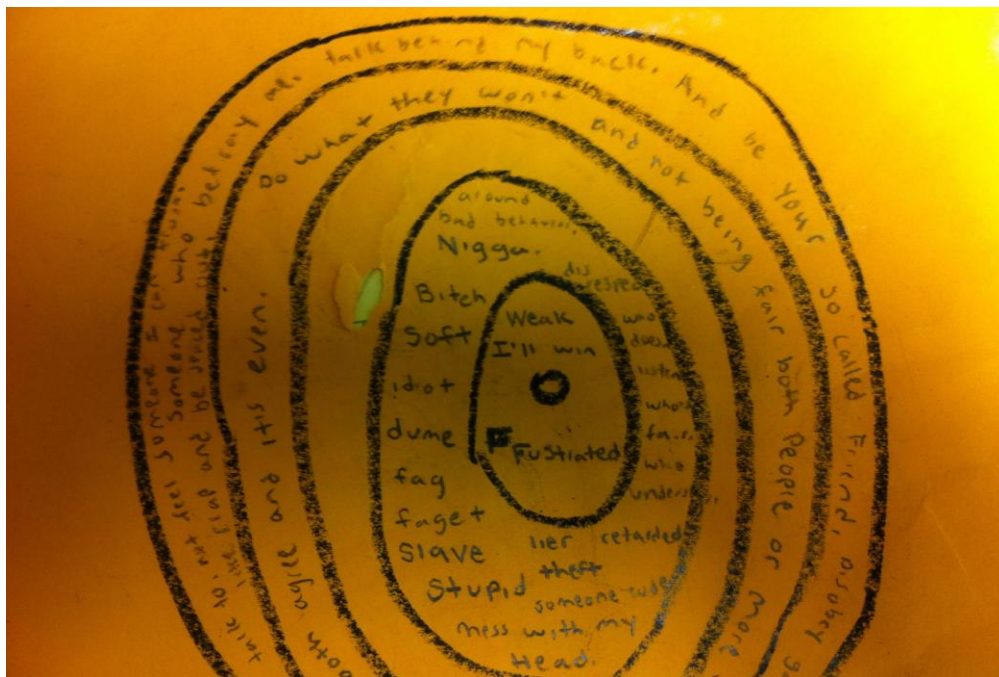


Image 5: “Angry Bullseye and Positive Clay” made by Deon.

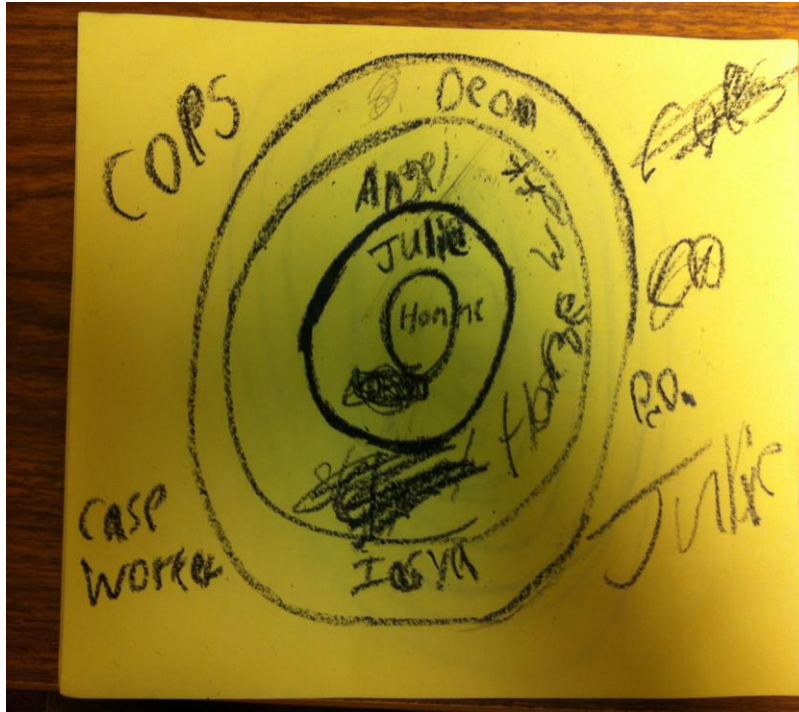


Image 6: “Angry Bullseye and Positive Clay” made by male resident from Nelson Hall.

Art Therapy Activity 3

Journey South (an example of when group therapy should not be applied).

Magic Mirror Group Activity

“Magic mirror” -When you look into the mirror, what does your inner self look like? Are there things that you can’t visually see, that may only be on the inside? What do those things look like?

Goals

Magic Mirror is an activity that has been designed for female residents at Homme Home to help with self expression, be more confident when identifying the self, being able to express the inner

self with other residents, enhancing their coping skills, and being able to recognize feelings of empathy.

Overview of Session with “Magic Mirror”

Therapist introduced activity to residents and expressed the directive to them. This group of residents does not usually work well together, there is visible segregation as soon as the residents sit down at the tables. Resident Cassidy asked intern if she had to share her project during process time, intern responded by saying “if you don’t feel comfortable expressing your art to the group, you don’t have to. If you would like to express to the therapists, you may do that.” During the activity, many of the residents remained quiet and kept proper boundaries between each other. When it came time to process, Tamara showed much hesitation by flipping her art over. Therapist asked Tamara about her drawing and responded with “you can look, I don’t care. If you don’t know what love, loyalty and respect means, then you won’t understand.” Tamara then flipped her art over to reveal gang symbols and gang colors. Therapist and intern redirected her by verbalizing that gang related art is not appropriate in Art Therapy and if that boundary is broken then Art Therapy will not be an option, due to violation of treatment work. Cassidy did not want to share with the group, but expressed verbally afterwards about her mask. She talked with therapist and intern and said that “she likes glitter and likes the color pink.” Intern and therapist both recognized the signs of containment due to her mask having visual cover over the mouth. Therapist asked Cassidy about this and Cassidy verbalized that she often does not speak what’s really on her mind, she would rather deal with it on her own than being able to verbalize because that is what she is used to. Therapist and intern reassured her that she is able to talk about feelings and emotions with therapist and intern because it is a safe place and

that is what they are there for. Cassidy acknowledged this response by nodding her head in a “yes” motion.

Reaction

Intern thought that this activity was a good way for the residents to show empathy for one another. However, due to the segregation between the residents, next time it may be more appropriate to do Art Therapy in different groups until all of these residents feel safe and secure in therapy group with one another.



Image 7: “Magic Mirror” made by Cassidy.

Structured Group Work

An example of a group therapy project with a structured theme that I have done with the residents I work with is the “Inspirational Wall Quilt.” For this project, the goal is to be able to understand the word “inspiration” and what it means and acknowledge people of inspiration.

Art Therapy Activity 4

Male Residents at Journey West

“Inspirational Wall Quilt”

Residents are to take two squares of construction paper and on one square create art about a person in your life that inspires you (maybe a parent, grandparent, friend, person of history). On the other square, create art about yourself using “I am.” (example: I am artistic, curious, determined, intense, spontaneous). When residents are done with their squares, tie all squares together using yarn. Once quilt is all tied together, it can be displayed on the wall.

Goals

The goal is to be able to understand the word “inspiration” and what it means and acknowledge people of inspiration. Inspiration intrigues us to work towards an approach, not copy or mimic another’s. Inspiration acts as a fuel to catapult us in our own direction, and to be individualistic. It is also important to have the residents see themselves in a positive aspect by learning and understanding the word “inspiration” and creating something individualized.

Overview of Session “Inspirational Wall Quilt”

Therapist directed residents to draw on two different squares, one that represents them as a person and the other as someone who inspires you. Residents asked about what an inspirational person is, the Therapist explain that it is someone you look up to, or that creates significant meaning in your life. Residents understood but majority of the group decided to pick inspirational objects rather than people. One resident mentioned that he did not have very many inspirational people, but rather had music as his main inspiration in life (Charles L.). Group listened to meditation and calming music during activity and it kept the pace slow and steady. Atmosphere was very relaxing during group activity. Residents asked Therapist to do activity as well. After the squares were completed, therapist directed residents to somehow tie the squares together using team work. Kyle tied Donald, Tommy and his all together while leaving the rest of the group out. Therapist reminded Kyle that if they did not help each other to tie the whole quilt together, that time would cut into their next activity. Kyle then helped Logan, Jeff and Charles L tie the quilt together.

Reaction

Expressing to the residents that inspiration is what intrigues us to work towards an approach and use it as a fuel to catapult us in our own direction is very important. It is also important to have the residents see themselves in a positive nature by understanding what it means and creating something that is individualized. Throughout this activity, I learned that many of the residents at Homme Home do not have parents or “role models” in their lives that they could relate to. The clients began to brainstorm together and mentioned that they could find their inspiration from objects, such as music and dance. After creating the art, the residents worked as a team to quilt the squares together using yarn. During this session, not only did the

residents learn about inspiration and individuality but also how to work together as a team and use strategies to solve problems to create such inspiration to each other.



Image 8: “Inspirational Wall Quilt” done by male residents at Journey West unit.



Image 9: A closer look at “Inspirational Wall Quilt.”

Concluding Group Therapy

Due to the nature of some of the residents, it is easy for them to get off track or do not obey “group rules” when letting them have free-rein to group therapy which can lead to confidentiality being exposed and boundaries being crossed. Although, depending on certain situations, it can be very therapeutic for the residents to have a free-day and express themselves without having a directive to follow. For instance, when certain incidents happen during the day it can throw the resident’s mentality through a loop and it can also block their creative minds. When incidents such as this happen, letting the resident’s have a “free day” can be a good way to release some tension. I have experienced many days where incidents affected the whole atmosphere of group therapy and caused me to think on my feet and use my knowledge and skills in advocacy to be in control of the group atmosphere. When situations like this happen, I have discovered that soothing music helps the residents to discover their creative flow and bring

their focal point back to the directive and what the purpose is of group therapy. After the setting is brought back to calm nature, the residents start to interact more towards each other and whatever tension was between them usually fades away. Even when there is no therapeutic directive given, many individuals use their therapy time by releasing and expressing themselves through art work, even if it happens to be subconsciously. After a session like this, there is realization of coping skills, social skills and good problem solving skills used between members of the group. Accomplishing such goals can be more rewarding to the resident's than the actual therapeutic nature and give them a sense of freedom again. Through my studies and learning experiences, I have realized that you will come across times where structured and unstructured will not work for group therapy. For instance, when the atmosphere is entirely negative for a certain group, you have to be careful and aware of your materials and surroundings.

Although group therapy is very beneficial for adolescents, it is not for everyone. There are often adolescents that are unwilling to attend for numerous reasons. Many incoming residents at Homme Home are often suspicious and hesitant of anything that is recommended by adults or figures of authority and are afraid of being labeled as "crazy" while attending group therapy sessions. Other individuals have significant issues with keeping safe boundaries between each other, which is something that is required to participate in group therapy. While these individuals aren't in group therapy, they are practicing individual therapy between client and therapist. For individuals like this in my experiences, they express feelings and emotions differently through individual therapy because the therapists' attention is more directed towards them, which gives them a higher feeling of trust while being interacted with. However, some individuals just need more one-on-one time between therapist and client to develop a therapeutic and safe relationship because there is no trust or feelings of safety. Once a safe relationship is

established between therapist and client, it may be easier for the therapist to introduce group therapy to that individual.

Concluding with a Personal Touch

The art that adolescents create can help me secure some insight on the teens life and concerns, especially situations where they feel that it is too embarrassing to reveal through verbal communication. Art Therapy is a useful tool to reveal an individuals sense of self, and help guide a path through treatment. Even though working with teens is difficult and demands a little extra work, they are guiding an accomplishment to myself as well, in a more personal way.

The time that I spent interning at Homme Home, was one of the most rewarding and most impacting times of my life. I never thought that it would be possible to have a group of adolescents to have such a life changing affect myself, in such a short amount of time. Each client I have met and worked with presented me with different challenges since each individual was in a different spot in their treatment. However, I found it a lot easier to remember details about their lives than I thought I would. Before I started, I had so many concerns about how the kids were going to react to me, how I was going to survive everything, all my processing notes, keeping the kids straight from who's who. Constantly asking: Do I have enough material for everyone? Is the material beneficial for everyone? What I've really discovered is that adolescents really like art and they really benefit from it. Sometimes I thought they were teaching me more than I was helping them, which is okay when you're in your intern work. In fact, they made me realize one of the most delightful, yet challenging aspects of my work in seeing these adolescents come in dealing with the same stress and issues that sometimes, I was learning to deal with in my

life too. These adolescents kept me honest with myself and I'm not kidding when I say that I was just a couple steps ahead of them in learning how to deal with some of my own malfunctions. I was told by the Director of Treatment at Homme Home that, "the best therapists are those who have learned from their own experiences because the wisdom you need as a counselor doesn't only come from books". I now live by this motto and becoming a successful therapist to me means that I will always be able to take that next step in my own personal growth, and to be able to confront that next issue that is often looked at as a "problem".

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

American Art Therapy Association. (2012)

Liebmann, M. (1999). *Art Therapy for Groups*
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Lykken, D. (1995). *The Antisocial Personalities*
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

McNeilly, G. (2005). *Group Analytic Art Therapy*
Jessica Kingsley Publishers London and Philadelphia

McNiff, S. (2004). *Art Heals: How creativity cures the soul*
Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Milia, D. (2000). *Self-Mutilation and Art Therapy: Violent Creation*
Jessica Kingsley Publishers London and Philadelphia

Riley, S., Oster, D. G., & Malchoiodi, A. C., (1999). *Contemporary Art Therapy with Adolescents*.

Rogers, N. (1993). *The creative connection: expressive arts as healing*
Science & behavior Books

Sheree, S. (2010) *Art and Expressive Therapy in Practice*
Retrieved from
<http://www.arttherapyblog.com/career/art-therapy-in-practice/#more-1274>

Spring, D. (2007) *Art in treatment: transatlantic dialogue*
Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.