Art Therapy

Exploring the benefits of making art in a support group setting with individual’s affected by Parkinson’s Disease

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Learning Objectives

• Participant will be able to define *art therapy*

• Participant will be able to identify 3 art making interventions to offer support group members

• Participant will increase understanding of the benefits of art making in a support group setting
What is art therapy?

• Is based on the idea that the creative process is healing
• Is an expressive means by which an individual can communicate their inner experience through meaningful engagement in art to others in a tangible manner
• The use of art-making activities to enhance well-being and to assist individuals in overcoming various difficulties and challenges
• Utilizes the therapeutic use of art making, in the context of a professional relationship
Use of Metaphor
Who is the art therapist?

• Art therapists...
• knowledgeable about the creative process
• Believe in the healing potential of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages
• professionals trained in both visual art and psychological theories and counseling
• professionals who help individuals make meaning of the images they create
Art Therapy
Began as profession in the 1940’s
RESEARCH
Art making and stress reduction

• A pilot study published in 2016 tested subjects cortisol level in saliva before and after engaging in art making of their choice.
• 75% of the subject had lower cortisol levels after art making
• Prior art making experience didn’t influence the outcome
Art therapy helps ease pain

- Moves focus away from painful stimuli
- Puts person in control
- Helps person manage emotions and improves quality of life

- Study of 200 patients found participating in art therapy for an average of 50 minutes significantly improved their moods, and lowered levels of pain and anxiety.
Clay manipulation

Individual and group
Evidenced decreased symptoms
Psychological and physiological

Group cohesion, safety, place for self expression
Coloring Mandalas

- Anxiety was measured by self-report and pulse rate
- Study found support for use of mandalas as an anxiety reduction tool
- Pulse rates returned to baseline after 4 minutes compared to 20 minutes in the control group
I have started coloring to manage my stress and anxiety.
Mandala
Art Therapy Interventions

- Drop in open studio approach
- Art therapy groups
- Individual art therapy

- **Going inward**
  - Introspection
  - Black paper/depression

- **Focusing outward**
  - Distraction
  - Connection
IT'S SUPPOSED TO RELIEVE STRESS...
## Parkinson’s Disease & art making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease process (experience)</th>
<th>Creative process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Betrayed by their bodies</td>
<td>• Creates order out of chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Changes in motor and cognitive function</td>
<td>• Creation vs destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>causing disordered movement</td>
<td>• Fluidity vs rigidity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Isolating</td>
<td>• Social connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Misunderstood</td>
<td>• Outward self expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Loss of control</td>
<td>• Place to exercise control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased dependency</td>
<td>• Independence/choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mood changes</td>
<td>• Positive mood changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fatigue</td>
<td>• Re-focuses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Energy</td>
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- Changes in motor and cognitive function causing disordered movement.
“As art therapists, we recognize that art can give life even to those whose lives have been severely compromised.”

Harriet Wadeson
Further thoughts about art therapy...

I do not have to be an artist to benefit from art therapy (or art making)...
What might you offer in a support group setting?

- Alcohol Inks
- Paint pouring
- Magazine photo collage
- Ongoing group mandala
- Inspiration/Gratitude board
- Inspiration stick
- Hope Stones
Inspiration Stick
Hope Stones
Art experiential
References


• Liebmann, M. 2004 Art Therapy for Groups 2nd edition  London Routledge

References


Froedtart & MEDICAL COLLEGE of WISCONSIN
References

• https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/arts-and-health

• NCCATA (National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Association) www.nccata.org

• AATA (American Art Therapy Association)

• www.americanarttherapyassociation.org
Thank You!

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**Alcohol Inks**-Alcohol inks are fast drying, highly pigmented, alcohol based inks used on hard, non-porous surfaces like ceramic tile, glass, metal or plastic.

Inks are pricey, but can go a long way. Use 91% rubbing alcohol vs alcohol blending solution marketed with alcohol inks.

For painting surfaces think Goodwill or St Vinnie’s-old tiles, glass vases, plates or decorative metal buckets. You can also purchase Yupo paper, works great, but pricey.

**Paint Pouring**-Paint pouring is a technique where acrylic paint is mixed with a pouring medium and then poured or dumped onto a surface. There are many YouTube tutorials. This is a no fail art technique that is a lot of fun to do and watch others doing.

I use liquid acrylic paints and a product called Floetrol. I mix these 3:1 ratio, 3 parts Floetrol to 1 part acrylic paint. Nothing else.

**Magazine Photo Collage**-A collage is a collection of pictures on a theme. Great if you’re not an artist. Mostly about choosing pictures that express what you want to say in your image.

Try a focus like “Parkinson’s does not define me” or “Words to live by”

**Mandala**-Basically a circle. A place to both contain and express. Have this out on a canvas for participants to add to each week.

**Inspiration/Gratitude Board**-To share inspiration use Post It notes (in all colors for fun) and ask people to write what inspires them. Invite people to take the Post It with the inspiration they might need. The gratitude board could be simple, like a graffiti wall for people to share at each meeting what they are grateful for.

**Intention Stick**-Collect sticks from nature and offer participants yarn, fabric, embroidery floss, ribbon, feathers, beads and anything else to wrap around and embellish the stick. The idea is to have them set an intention for themselves, then create the stick as a visual reminder to themselves to focus on their intention.

**Golden Buddha-Surprise Clay**-I use Crayola air dry clay. It comes in white and a few colors. Form a ball of white clay a little smaller than a tennis ball around a colored ball about the size of a grape. Present the white ball to participants and ask them to work the clay as you read the story of the Golden Buddha. They will discover a surprise (the colored clay), that provides a nice metaphor to go with the story. You can follow experience with a discussion.

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In Thailand there is a place called the Temple of the Golden Buddha. The temple itself is very small, probably no larger than thirty feet by thirty feet. In there stands a ten and a half foot tall, solid gold Buddha. It weighs over two and a half tons and is valued at approximately 196 million dollars. Next to the Buddha there is a glass case that contains a large piece of clay about eight inches thick and twelve inches wide. Next to the glass case is a typewritten page describing the history of this magnificent piece of art.

Back in 1957 a group of monks from a monastery had to relocate a clay Buddha from their temple to a new location. The monastery was to be relocated to make room for the development of a highway through Bangkok. When the crane began to lift the giant idol, the weight of it was so tremendous that it began to crack. What’s more, rain began to fall. The head monk, who was concerned about damage to the sacred Buddha, decided to lower the statue back to the ground and cover it with a large canvas tarp to protect it from the rain. Later that evening the head monk went to check on the Buddha. He shined his flashlight under the tarp to see if the Buddha was staying dry. As the light reached the crack, he noticed a little gleam shining back and thought it strange. As he took a closer look at this gleam of light, he wondered if there might be something underneath the clay. He went to fetch a chisel and hammer from the monastery and began to chip away at the clay. As he knocked off shards of clay the little gleam grew brighter and bigger. Many hours of labor went to before the monk stood face to face with the extraordinary solid gold Buddha.

Historians believe that several hundred years before the head monk’s discovery, the Burmese army was about to invade Thailand (then called Siam). The Siamese monks, realizing that their country would soon be attacked, covered their precious golden Buddha with an outer covering of clay in order to keep their treasure from being looted by the Burmese. Unfortunately, it appears that the Burmese slaughtered all the Siamese monks, and the well-kept secret of the golden Buddha remained intact until that fateful day in 1957.

“We are all like the clay Buddha, covered with a shell of hardness created out of fear, and yet underneath each of us is a ‘golden Buddha’, ‘golden Christ’, or a ‘golden essence’, which is our real self. Somewhere along the way, between the ages of two and nine, we begin to cover up our ‘golden essence’, our natural self. Much like the monk with the hammer and the chisel, our task now is to discover our true essence once again”.

Jack Canfield