

## CHAPTER

# 3

### ART THERAPY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HEALING

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#### **Introduction**

Art therapy is an established mental health profession that uses the creative process of art-making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. Psychologically it is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behaviour, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight. Art therapy integrates the fields of human development, visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms), and the creative process with models of counselling and psychotherapy in this process. Art therapy is a specialized area of mental health that uses art materials and the creative process to explore emotion, reduce anxiety, increase self-esteem and resolve other psychological conflicts

Visual expression has been used for healing throughout history, but art therapy did not emerge as a distinct profession until the 1940s. In the early 20th century, psychiatrists became interested in the artwork created by their patients with mental illness. At around the same time, educators were discovering that children's art expressions reflected developmental, emotional, and cognitive growth. By the mid-century, hospitals, clinics, and rehabilitation centres increasingly began to include art therapy programs along with traditional "talk therapies," underscoring the recognition that the creative process of art-making enhanced the recovery, health, and wellness of individuals.

The word "therapy" originated from the Greek word Therapies, which means "to be attentive to" this could explain as follows: for instance when a creative and skilled professional on one hand, attends to an individual who is making the art. On the other hand this skilled professional's guidance is a key to the process of therapy. Creative expression has been used for healing from the traditional period till the present day. The Holy Bible recorded the earliest healing in the history of mankind, "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul that David took a harp, and played with his hand so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" This form of healing therapy was repeatedly done by David to get King Saul out of his psychiatric problem as recorded in the Bible.

Art therapy as a subject of study integrates the fields of human development, visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms), and the creative process with models of counselling and psychotherapy,

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study, therefore, is to educate people on how art and other methods can aid in the healing of individuals

### **Purpose of this study**

This study focuses on effective ways to use art therapy to heal patients of all ages to improve cognitive and sensor motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress and advance societal and ecological changes

### **Research Questions**

- How can art therapy help in the treatment of children with learning disabilities
- People experiencing mental health issues
- Adults experiencing severe stress
- Individuals suffering from brain injury
- Children or adults who have experienced a traumatic

### **Scope of the study**

The focus is mainly on art and medical area of study

### **Significance of the study**

Increase in knowledge for all

### **Review of Related Literature**

Art therapy is an established mental health profession that uses the creative process of art-making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. Psychologically it is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behaviour, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight. Art therapy integrates the fields of human development, visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms), and the creative process with models of counselling and psychotherapy in this process. Art therapy is a specialized area of mental health that uses art materials and the creative process to explore emotion, reduce anxiety, increase self-esteem and resolve other psychological conflicts. Visual expression has been used for healing throughout history, but art therapy did not emerge as a distinct profession until the 1940s. In the early 20th century, psychiatrists became interested in the artwork created by their patients with mental illness. At around the same time, educators were discovering that children's art expressions reflected developmental, emotional, and cognitive growth. By the mid-century, hospitals, clinics, and

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Although art therapy is a relatively young therapeutic discipline, its roots lie in the use of the arts in the 'moral treatment' of psychiatric patients in the late 18th century, this moral treatment, Susan Hogan argues, “arose out of utilitarian philosophy and also from a non-conformist religious tradition”, (Hogan, S. 2001). Other researchers are of the view that art therapy first began around mid- 20<sup>th</sup> Century, arising independently in English-speaking and European countries. The British artist Adrian Hill coined the term *art therapy* in 1942 (Hogan, S. 2001). Hill, recovering from tuberculosis in a sanatorium, discovered the therapeutic benefits of drawing and painting while convalescing. He wrote that the value of art therapy lay in "completely engrossing the mind (as well as the fingers)...releasing the creative energy of the frequently inhibited patient", which enabled the patient to "build up a strong defence against his misfortunes". He suggested artistic work to his fellow patients. That began his art therapy work, which was documented in 1945 in his book, *Art Versus Illness*, (Hill, A. 1945).

U.S. art therapy pioneers Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer began practising art around the same time as Hill. Naumburg, an educator, asserted that "art therapy is psychoanalytically oriented" and that free art expression "becomes a form of symbolic speech which...leads to an increase in verbalization in the course of therapy, (Naumburg, M. 1953). Edith Kramer, an artist, pointed out the importance of the creative process, psychological defences, and artistic quality, writing that "sublimation is attained when forms are created that successfully contain...anger, anxiety, or pain, (Kramer, E. 1971). Other early proponents of art therapy in the United States include Elinor Ulman, Robert "Bob" Ault, and Judith Rubin. The American Art Therapy Association was founded in 1969, (Junge, M. 2010). National professional associations of art therapy exist in many countries, including Brazil, Canada, Finland, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, South Korea, and Sweden but not in Nigeria.

Art Therapy is believed to begin as far back as cavemen times unknowingly (Otunaiya 2009), this is because even before the usage of language, pictures were painted on cave walls to perform the dual function of expressing feelings and recording actions, which was referred to as an effective way of communicating. In the same vein employing artistic visual symbols for a psychological connection could be a good sign of art therapy for the early hunters who believed in the religious and magical power of the symbols. Human beings have always expressed themselves with symbols throughout history. In Africa, masks, ritual pottery, costumes, ritual objects of shrines, cave drawings and Egyptian hieroglyphics are among the visual objects of

therapy in the early period. In some other places or parts of the world Celtic arts symbols are all visual records of self-expression and communication through art.

Recently, the field of art therapy has gained attention in healthcare facilities throughout major countries of the world and is within the fields of psychiatry, psychology, counselling, education and arts. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, art began to be formalised as a healing therapy. Art therapy integrates psychotherapeutic techniques with the creative process to improve the mental health and well-being of individuals. The American Art Therapy Association describes art therapy as "a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behaviour, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight.

**Some situations in which art therapy might be utilized include:**

- Children with learning disabilities
- Adults experiencing severe stress
- Children suffering from behavioural or social problems at school or home
- People experiencing mental health problems
- Individuals suffering from a brain injury
- Children or adults who have experienced a traumatic event

An art therapist may use a variety of art methods including drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage with clients ranging from young children to the elderly. Clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues can benefit from expressing themselves creatively. Hospitals, private mental health offices, schools, and community organizations are all possible settings where art therapy services may be available.

**Art Therapy Projects**

**General Projects**

- Get Creative With Collages via Art Therapy
- Knitting (Art Therapy)
- Make something, anything, without direction or the result in mind. Grab some materials and paper and let anything flow out.
- Positive Pockets via Creative Therapy Sessions. Create a personal box of inspirational statements.
- Project Positivity via Deviant Art – Write out or create a piece of art that incorporates 10 things that you like about yourself.
- Sewing Dolls and Pillows

**Projects for Reaching Goals and Solving Problems**

- **Panic Book** – Create small pictures or cards of things, places and people that help you to be calm, or that bring your mind into them and away from panic and anxious thoughts.

Document your favourite things so that you can look at the images in times of stress to help bring you into the 'now'.

- **The Problem** – Draw a picture that represents any current problem that you are having. Try to do this without thinking about it too much, just letting the process take over. Once done look at the drawing to see if it reveals anything new about the issue. It might help to set it aside and look at it the next day.
- **Tarot Personality Cards** – Create visual representations of the 'voices in your head,' otherwise known as alters and/or personality fragments. Create one representation on each card. I suggest using collage art because it is easy to cut out symbols and pictures that remind you of each alter and put them together.
- **Vision Board** – This project can be an invaluable tool for helping you meet goals by making them visually tangible. Create a piece of art, or series of art pieces, that represents your goal or desired result.

### **When is Art Therapy Used?**

Art therapy can be used to treat a wide range of mental disorders and psychological distress. In many cases, it might be used in conjunction with other psychotherapy techniques such as group therapy or cognitive-behavioral therapy.

- General illness: Art making is a common activity used by many people to cope with illness.
- Cancer diagnosis.

Many studies have been conducted on the benefit of art therapy on cancer patients

- Disaster relief
- Dementia
- Autism
- Schizophrenia
- Geriatric patient
- Trauma and children

Art therapists work in a wide variety of settings including Hospitals and clinics, both medical and psychiatric, outpatient mental health agencies etc. Art therapy involves the use of creative techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, colouring or sculpture to help people express themselves artistically and examine the psychological and emotional undertones in their art. Today art therapy is widely practised in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centres, forensic institutions, schools, crisis centres, senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. During individual and/or group sessions art therapists elicit their clients' inherent capacity for art-making to

enhance their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Research supports the use of art therapy within a professional relationship for the therapeutic benefits gained through artistic self-expression and reflection for individuals who experience illness, trauma, and mental health problems and those seeking personal growth

### **How Does Art Therapy Work?**

An art therapist may use a variety of art methods including drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage with clients ranging from young children to the elderly. Clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues can benefit from expressing themselves creatively. Hospitals, private mental health offices, schools, and community organizations are all possible settings where art therapy services may be available. You might also wonder how an art therapy session differs from the average art class. "In most art therapy sessions, the focus is on your inner experience that is your feelings, perceptions, and imagination.

While art therapy may involve learning skills or art techniques, the emphasis is generally first on developing and expressing images that come from inside the person, rather than those he or she sees in the outside world," explains Cathy Maldiochi in *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*. "And while some traditional art classes may ask you to paint or draw from your imagination, in art therapy, your inner world of images, feelings, thoughts, and ideas are always of primary importance to the experience."

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, the value of research in the natural sciences are widely recognized, and the fact that artist also engage in research must be acknowledged. The research operation in any society is highly valued, we need to understand why being engaged in legitimate art-making tasks implies that one is engaged in worthwhile research activities. The research operations associated with creating art, are quite different from the research activities of the scientists. Research in both natural and social sciences relies upon measures that generate quantitative data from which qualities are inferred. In visual art counting the number of times something occurs reflects on the level of its significance. In science, specific instances of behaviour are identified and quantified very carefully. These are translated into qualities which become the basis for formulating generalizations about phenomena. In art "style", a term used by both art historians and art critics, is a construct for thinking about reoccurring characteristics in works of art. A particular style is inferred from observing and categorizing common elements in works produced by a variety of artists, or in the works of an individual artist.

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