



APPROACHES AND METHODS FOR OVERCOMING OF POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS IN CONNECTION WITH DISASTER SITUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The disaster situations have become more and more frequent for the last decade, and they have intensified the manifestation of fragmentation of the modern society, bringing about a sense of helplessness. In those conditions, the art therapeutic groups provide a sense of connection with the other people and interpersonal support. The aim of the current study is an examination of the way, by which the brain and body react to events causing an acute stress reaction. Assessment of art therapy applicability and helpfulness is done in connection with disaster situations, and comparative analysis of the main approaches and methods, used in practice of work with people who had suffered traumatic events. The results of the study show that the new type of art therapists may disclose an emotional problem, related to trauma sustained, that the client cannot cope with on his/her own. The focus - in connection with the choice of method - is concentrated on the therapeutic needs of the person. In terms of the particular individual, the different methods of art therapy create a medium for the achievement of alleviation from insurmountable emotions or traumas. In social terms, the latter methods help to be achieved an increase of the sense for social adaptation of people from all ages, and of whole families. In conclusion, it may be stated, that the use of different forms of support after disaster situations, has major significance for recovery and maintenance of the physical, emotional, and mental health of the population.

Keywords: disaster situations, posttraumatic stress, art therapy, support

INTRODUCTION

A tendency has been found - of increase of the frequency and severity of disasters from natural and anthropogenic origin - for the last few years. In the context of decades of climatic changes and deepening separation between the economic and social groups, the impacts of disasters continue to be more and more devastating. Every year millions of people are affected by diseases, the death of rela-

tives and friends, and other reasons, resulting in an abrupt change in the way of life or were forced to move out of their hometowns. [1, 2]

People from all age groups have difficulties in coping with emotional problems, occurring in connection with disaster situations. The disaster situations increase the manifestation of fragmentation of the modern society, bringing about a sense of helplessness. In those conditions, the art therapeutic groups provide a sense of connection with the other people and interpersonal support. The group reduces the isolation and alienation, while the use of art therapeutic methods contributes to integration of the body, mind, and spirit. The art therapy established more and more itself on a global scale - in the last few decades - as a group and individual means for maintenance and recovery due to its universalism.[3, 4, 5]

AIM AND TASKS

The aim of the current study is an investigation of the way by which the brain and body react to the events - causing acute stress reaction - in connection with disaster situations.

The accomplishing of the aim set is achieved by means of completing the following tasks: 1. assessment of applicability and helpfulness of the art therapy in that kind of situations; and 2. comparative analysis of the main approaches and methods of the art-therapy, used in the practice for work with people who have undergone traumatic events.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. Assessment of the Applicability and Helpfulness of the Art Therapy upon Disaster Situations.

The art therapy is focused on tendencies, which were formed in the theory and practice. Although the roots of the art therapy are in the distant past, it regained present interest again in the last five decades. The art may be an instrument, which is to be used as an addition to the verbal therapy. The artistic expression is an activity involving the brain in a way, which may be used for the improvement of

the therapeutic treatment. By means of increasing the understanding of art, the art therapy rapidly turns itself into a preferred choice for therapy of different diseases. At present the art therapy is frequently met a form of successful intervention in hospitalized environments, homes for people who suffered violence, physical impairments and families in times of need; in afflicted children and parents, etc., as main or supporting therapy. [1, 3, 6]

The art therapy is an effective method in assistance of social and medical activity, by means of which the recovery from traumas - caused by the disaster - is supported. Art therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and healthcare cadres use the art as therapy and for the aid of treatment. The art therapy may be an important set of instruments in work for overcoming of emotionally related disorders or experiences. The traumatic events reflect both on the body and mind, and, thus, the posttraumatic stress disorder is expressed simultaneously by means of psychological and physiological symptoms - "the body preserves the result" of the emotional experience. The new type of therapists - based on the professional analysis of the creations - may disclose the problem of the client, e.g. to determine whether the person has an emotional problem, related with sustained trauma, with which he/she cannot cope on him-/herself. [7, 8, 9]

The art therapy - like other forms of psychotherapy - encourages the self-understanding, the self-expression, and supports emotionally people of all ages (children, adults), and whole families. In terms of the particular individual, the different methods of art therapy create a medium for the achievement of alleviation from insurmountable emotions or traumas, conflicts and problems solving. In the social terms, they enrich the everyday life and help the achievement of higher sense for social adaptation. [5, 10]

2. Comparative Analysis of the Main Approaches and Methods of the Art Therapy Used in the Practice.

The focus in the choice of method is on the therapeutic needs of the person, who is to find meaning in the creation process, facilitated by a competent therapist.

The methods of different kinds of art may be used independently or in integrative approach in order to be improved the condition of the affected person. The musical therapy is used in persons with emotional deprivation and inability to overcome stress, in impaired children with deep perceptive difficulties, patients with neurotic phobias, etc. It is applied successfully to persons with speech problems acquired by stress or sustained traumas. The drum therapy is an ancient approach, which uses the rhythm as a prophylactic and therapeutic means for self-expression. The drum therapy causes deep relaxation, decreases blood pressure, and diminishes stress. The work with drums is an effective method for overcoming negative feelings, blockages, and emotional traumas. The physical stimulation by means of drumming brings about the emotional release, needed for coping with emotional problems. The other mechanism, by which the drum therapy causes positive effect, is the work in a group. The health consequences of social support are universally acknowledged. Those effects are not the only palliative, but

they represent mechanisms for the production of the so called psycho-biological effects. The investigators suppose that the drum therapy serves for the distraction of the attention from the pain and grief. Moreover, the drums stimulate the production of endorphines and, thus, they may support the overcoming of pain and grief. [11, 12, 13]

Because the core of traumatic experiences is physiological, the expression and processing of the sensory memories from the traumatic event have the same significance for the successful intervention. The art is a natural sensory regimen for expression because it includes touch, sense of smell, and other senses within the frames of experience. The drawing and other artistic activities mobilize the expression of sensory memories by the way beyond the capacities of speech interviews and interventions. The way by which the recollection is preserved in the memory also helps in shedding light on why the art therapy may be helpful for those traumatized. The problems are a result of traumatic recollections, which are hidden and suppressed. The art therapy may support overcoming of apparent and non-apparent recollections for the stress situation by means of facilitating the creation of a short story, by means of which the person may examine its recollections and why they are so shocking. The different kinds of artistic activities maintain the traumatized individuals to think and feel simultaneously about the alarming experiences. At last, the art therapy may be used in order also to be included relaxation, by which the therapeutic effect to be ended. [6, 14, 15, 16]

CONCLUSIONS

1. The results from the study show that - based on the professional analysis - the new type of art therapists may disclose emotional problem related to sustained trauma, with which the client cannot cope with on his/her own.
2. The art therapy may help to overcome posttraumatic stress disorder by means of suitable methods for investigation and release of traumatic recollections related to the disaster.
3. Methods of different types of art may be used independently or in integrative approach depending on the therapeutic needs of the person.
4. In social terms, a positive assessment for application of the methods of art therapy may be given because it supports the achievement of increased feeling for social adaptation of people from all ages and whole families.

Final Statement

The use of different forms of support for the population after disaster situations is of great significance for the recovery and maintenance of the physical, emotional, and mental health of the affected people. Multi-layer and, at the same time, individual art creates its therapeutic mission and fulfils its prophylactic role for the particular person, as well as for the society. The communication between people is a key for populational stability to disaster situations. However, the concrete way by which the social support is realized may be different and it depends on the specific location, conditions, and available possibilities.

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