

Arts Based Therapy

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What is Arts Based Therapy:

Arts Based Therapy (ABT) is defined as the evidence-based use of art forms (music, drama, and visual arts) to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship. It is practiced by a credentialed professional who has completed the ABT Certificate Course. BT is not just an acronym for arts based therapy. It is primarily an art form, practised scientifically, and based on the Subtle Energy Guide.

Scope:

ABT can be applied individually, in a duet, or in a group. An ABT Practitioner is trained in the generic use of multi-arts media for therapeutic goals. ABT practitioners can use this therapy as an adjunctive/augmentative therapy, complementing the work of other practitioners from different disciplines such as social work, speech/language, physio therapy, medicine, nursing, education and so forth.

Who is an ABT Practitioner:

ABT is designed for non-artists to learn and practice. The basic capacity for storytelling, painting, dance, singing and rhythm is inherent in all. ABT aims at enhancing these basic capacities so that practitioners create for themselves a vocabulary of creative arts-based techniques which they can apply in therapeutic settings along with assessment, therapeutic objectives and evaluation. An ABT Practitioner must experience a new cognitive system for oneself. Only when the therapist practises personal artistry, s/he can share it with others. The therapist must accumulate sufficient personal power in order to practice ABT. Eventually the therapist begins to perceive the world in energetic fact form, which is free from conditioned responses.

Arts in Therapy:

Research indicates that music, drama and

visual art in therapy have the following observable effects:

- i. Cortical Arousal
- ii. Memory:
- iii. Biomedical or Psychosocial States:
- iv. Emotional Responses:
- v. Social Skills and Behaviour:
- vi. Physical Rehabilitation:
- vii. Language and Speech:

Arts Based Therapy in relation to Parkinsonism:

•ABT stimulates and enhances creativity:
Creativity is a mental process utilizing all of the brain's specialized capabilities, engaging the 'whole brain'. In a research undertaken by Dutch neurologist Professor Lakke, it has been found that creative ability remains intact, in spite of the neurological problems experienced by people with Parkinson's. As long as the emphasis is on self-expression and creativity, art-making is one activity in which people with Parkinson's can participate without feeling inadequate.

•Reduction in tremors, rigidity and freezing:
The key issue in art activity for neurological conditions is that: as participants become absorbed in the art-making process their Parkinson's symptoms tended to die down. The persons mind gets diverted from 'parkinsons' to a meditative state. For example, one of the participants in a Parkinson's workshop, found that his movements were erratic when he started drawing but after practising this activity for a few minutes he was able to take up a brush and surprise himself with smoothly flowing lines. Thru the use of music, a rhythm is established, eventually resulting in the control of involuntary movement. The participant is propelled to flow from one step to the other, galvanising the nervous system into action.

•Improvement of Gait

Parkinson's is a debilitating neurodegenerative disease. Patients often experience persistent problems, of varying degrees, in the area of

neurological motor deficits. Gait disturbances are a frequent cause of disability and impairment for patients with PD. Restoration of mobility is critical to successful rehabilitation. Recently, rhythmic auditory stimulation (RAS) has emerged as efficacious in improving and normalizing limb movements in neurologically impaired populations. Research has demonstrated that auditory rhythmical cueing improved gait in people with Parkinson's disease.

•**Learning new skills:**

Observations at the Kingston Movement disorder Clinic in Melbourne suggest that people with Parkinson's are able to learn new skills successfully, however, problems arise when skills become automatic as this response is impaired through Parkinson's. As one engages in the process of art-making, intuition and the unconscious take over rather than an 'intellectual control' and eventually a form emerges. This opens up pathways for exploring new or different ways of doing / completion of tasks. Further, constant stimulation with new challenges also helps to develop powers of concentration.

•**Reduction of stressful / negative feelings:**

Art therapist Moya Cormick coupled painting with meditation and observed that meditation was an effective tool in releasing pent-up feelings. The creative act itself appears to stimulate free expression and release tension, the combination of meditation and art activity provides optimum conditions in which a person with Parkinson's can function. Participants lost their masked look; felt relaxed and were able to move comparatively easily post meditation. The

meditative process seemed to overcome the lack of the missing chemical, dopamine and participants appeared to be able to operate relatively well whether or not their medication was working effectively at the time. While in meditative or creative mode the brain is working subconsciously with low stress levels. Painting, on the other hand, has a calming and therapeutic effect on the mind.

Improvement in communication:

Struggling with complicated conscious acts is by comparison stress-inducing in the person with Parkinson's. For example, trying to join in a conversation can be frustrating as the composition of an original remark involves complex processes. These include finding the words, organizing them into a sentence then speaking it aloud, by which time the conversation has moved to another topic. By comparison many with Parkinson's report their singing remains normal and they are still able to contribute effectively in choral work. Over a period of time, the use of voice and rhythm in therapy results in enhanced verbal skills, increased communication and sociability. Processes such as story-telling encourages the participants to communicate with other group members and is also viewed as a method of self-expression. As the participant engages in the process of story-telling, an effort is made to remember sequences and events, thus having a positive impact on memory too.

Source:

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=is-it-true-that-creativit>

<http://www.innovations.ahrq.gov>

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<http://nnc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/21/5/455>

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