

REVIEWING THE ROLE OF THEATER AS A TECHNIQUE IN ART THERAPY

***Robabeh Ghazali¹ and Mehrnaz Sadat Al-e Hashem²**

¹Academic Board Member, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

²Department of Art Research, Ramsar, Iran

*Author for Correspondence

ABSTRACT

It is a problem and major concern that science and technology is growing fast and man is constantly challenging with its aftereffects and the resulting psychological and mental damages. Therefore, he must seek some ways to heal the psychological damage. The questions of this paper are: 1- Can art help this healing with its positive psychological effects? 2- Can theater, that man has always consoled his machine-life psychological and mental disorders with, be effective in healing the psychological damage? One way to answer the questions is this that with respect to the birth of specialists on behavioral sciences the value of art, theater in particular, and its impact on correcting social abnormal behaviors are being highlighted day by day. Art therapy as a discipline in group theater is efficient. The goal is understanding useful methods in drama therapy. In the course of research we came to know that the art therapy methods intend to reinforce unconscious elements of man, escaping liberation and expression, by drama therapy through self-motivation. This is because studying social conditions through roleplaying, simulation and experiment with various ways and behaviors, and using group roleplaying in the training courses give the patient self-confidence and help his healing from psychological disorders.

Keywords: *Art Therapy, Drama Therapy, Methods, Behavioral Modification*

INTRODUCTION

Art therapy means healing psychological disorders through the media of art in which the client expresses himself and his emotions and helps the therapist to analyze what he has presented and proceed with other methods of treatment.

Art since old times has been an efficient tool in the hands of man for expressing feelings and emotions, peace of mind, and health. The British artist Adrian Hill coined the term art therapy in 1942 (Landgarten, 1999). U.S. art therapy pioneer Margaret Naumburg began practicing art therapy in a hospital in New York in 1940. Laretta Bender and Schilder began practicing art therapy on handicapped children and then the art therapy found its way into Europe so that today various techniques of art therapy help healing psychological disorders.

In art therapy, the elements must be first able to create fast effects and secondly, they must not need special skills and techniques. The art techniques intend to reinforce unconscious elements of man, escaping liberation and expression, by drama therapy through self-motivation.

Art therapy is basically an interpretation and clarification of associations and verbal communications with the clients and legalization of their behaviors in a broad sense. Art therapy must enable the client to gain appropriate understanding of his individual capacities and capabilities.

The elements chosen are very influential in the course of treatment. Art elements must be selected according to the age, feelings and sentiments of the client. Art therapy can be practiced in general hospitals, mental hospitals, mental clinics, nursery homes, and in rehabilitation services for the physically handicapped, prisons and even healthy people wishing to live successfully. Art therapy must be practiced by an expert, someone who could be able to distinguish the similarities, differences, and the probable contradictions among the clients. "Participation in group art activities makes clients overcome their fear of direct confrontation with their feelings. In this connection, art activities in the first stages of group therapy will help improve self-confidence, mutual respect and a feeling of determination and success. According to Tolstoy from his "What is art?" the aim of art is not merely to produce beauty, or to provide

Review Article

pleasure, enjoyment, or entertainment. Art is a means of communication, and is an important means of expression of any experience, or of any aspect of the human condition.” (Ibid: 4)

In this paper, we will continue with expressing the goals of art therapy and its history, as well as such techniques as group therapy through art works. Meanwhile, the weak and strong points of the groups will be highlighted.

Goals of Art Therapy

The goals of art therapy in rehabilitation include positive coping skills, working on terrible losses the victims suffer from illness, expressing anger and disability that cause a feeling of sin or fancy of punishment, giving prognostic awareness, working on cognitive faults, the release of pent-up emotions, regaining lost powers, creating motivation for improvement, regaining a feeling of identity, increase self-esteem, accepting restrictions coming from new body image, determining new treatment compliance, stress release, practicing end of treatment and return to home.

In art therapy the therapist must have sufficient knowledge on the area he is going to work with the client. Search can be made into visual arts as a method for art therapy. But one of the artistic ways that has caused great successes is drama therapy. Although drama therapy is a relatively a new profession, it is practiced on a large number of clients. War handicapped persons and people with psychological disorders, drug addicts, and psychopaths are among the people that can be treated by drama therapy. If we accept that art – in its real sense – has an evolutionary concept in mind, we will focus more on its application. Art along with evolution of thought takes place step by step and lays positive impact on mental growth. Many studies show that art activities have managed to uphold cognitive and social functions and empower individuals in confrontation with problems.

Using art will be profitable only when its artistic concepts are applied in a purposeful way for certain objectives. In this sense, the meaning of art therapy will be purposeful and disciplined use of artistic activities, its processing and production in mental health, and individual and social relationships that begin from prevention and training. “Art has natural therapeutic structure because if it is used purposeful in an analytical way it can reduce psychological pressure and boost self-awareness and bring about the change in client and therapist” (Liebman, 2010). Experiences of psychologists show that art therapy creates a safe haven in which no one is under threat, everyone accepts it easily, therefore, the therapist can use its power and influence in the best possible way.

Art Therapy in Iran

Although Iranian art has a calmative and unity-oriented nature but it is yet to find its diversified and wide-scale role in appropriate social and applied areas. In other words, despite the fact that Iranian temperament is artistic in form and narration and the past history of culture and literature of this land is mixed with mystics and art, in total, the orientation of Iranian objectivity is idealist and less realist. Iranian art has limited chance for juxtaposition with palpable realities and social demands. In this connection, it is necessary to think about art more realistically and infuse art into the everyday life and public demands, and use its scientific and aspects and methods more than before.

What is Drama Therapy?

Yalom, an American existential psychiatrist, has written “The Gift of Therapy” for his concerns on the future of the science of psychology. “With the rapid development of the science of psychology during the recent decades no one can deny the new value and the need to use them” (Yalom, 2010).

According to British Psychotherapists Association, drama therapy is conscious use of therapeutic aspects of drama and art in a certain period of treatment. In this compound method, of labor and drama, the roleplaying methods are used for facilitate creativity, imagination, leaning and self-analysis.

Fig 2- A scene of original theater: authors

Drama therapy may practically have various forms: in relation to various aspects of the personality of individuals – and this form of drama therapy presents methods through which a group can reflect its dynamicity and feedback. A method that oral psychotherapy is unable to implement all alone. In this

Review Article

method, the possibility of changing people through boosting self-assertion, self-conceit and self-awareness, and creating a chance for thinking, feeling and acting is presented in some way. Awareness, exploration and reflection of senses and sentiments and creative expression - that enables the individuals in a group to establish emotional relations with other individuals, in order to create self-confidence and self-awareness in them and pleasure of being with other individuals.

Using dramatic scripts, fables and ceremonies, that enable personal experiences and group movements to be recalled in a symbolic, allegoric and supernatural way. The text, story or ceremony, provide an appropriate structure and distance for personal recognition and intellectual growth. Paying attention to social positions – through roleplaying, meditation, simulation and experiment by various ways and behaviors, using roleplaying in the educational periods, that give the patient self-confidence, can be examples for this case. In this group situation a group of individuals under treatment, create a safe situation for taking risks and evaluating the aftereffects.

The turning point of all these methods is the belief in this fact that the creative procedure of drama therapy allows the participants to restudy their beliefs and feelings and try new ways of being different in a safe situation.

Drama therapy is applied in various centers including: educational centers, prisons, child care centers, and private sector – drama therapy workshops that help promotion of creativity, imagination, insight and establishing relations through physical awareness, roleplaying and dialog. Drama therapy has ancient and historical roots in religious healing ceremonies and public drama in various societies. This meeting point of psychology and drama, depending upon the ability of the drama, is used for human being's recognition and treatment. It is practically taken from theory and practice in transactional analysis group therapy "under the influence of "Yungian Archtypal", "Gestalt Therapy" and "systems theory". Drama therapy can be a valuable instrument in the process of self-awareness and personality perfection. "Drama in general, apart from any classification and valuation is a human practice" (Azadivar, 2000).

Reasons behind Applying Group Work in Art Therapy:

- 1- The majority of social acquisitions take place in groups. Therefore, this group work provides much is an appropriate environment for to meet this goal.
- 2- People with similar needs can support one another and help removing of problems interchangeably.
- 3- Members can make use of the feedback of other members of the group.
- 4- Group members can observe reactions of others (simulation) and take new roles, thus they will be supported and empowered.
- 5- In group works the majority of issues related to family dynamics is introduced that can be later tested and applied.
- 6- Team works can be an appropriate ground for putting in action of the hidden resources and capacities.
- 7- Group work for some individuals like those avoiding friendship from others in the group, is more appropriate.
- 8- Distribution of powers and responsibilities makes group work fairer.
- 9- Some therapists or people with responsibility of the group believe that group experience is more satisfactory than individual activity.
- 10- In view of applying specialty to help a group of people simultaneously, group work is more economical.

Despite these advantages, group work has some disadvantages as the following:

- 1- Confidentiality is more difficult to ensure since more people are involved.
- 2- Group work can be difficult to organize and it needs more resources.
- 3- Less individual attention is available to members of a group.
- 4- A group may be "labeled" or acquire a stigma by being more visible.
- 5- Group members can easily hide or escape from their emotions.
- 6- Some participants may feel anxious or fear of the skills of others members (Brown, 1992).

Although there are some disadvantages, group work has more advantages and superiority that psychotherapist pays more attention to it in drama therapy.

Review Article

History of Drama Therapy

Since ancient times, theater has been the proper art for picturing the human experience. Playwrights, whose first experiences predate to the Greek tragedies, rewrote mythology to fight ethical and religious principles of the society. Playwrights under the influence of Freud in the 20th century paid more attention to individual conflicts. The characters of the play fought with such issues related to individual identity, threats, defining their relations with others, and exploring meanings in a world that seemed to be contractual and illogical most of the time. Drama therapy as basis has had its impacts. The most important work in this connection was the logical expansion of drama therapy by Jacob Moreno in the current century. Through this organized technique, the patient pictures himself/herself within part to part work with therapist and by roleplaying he plays the important events in his life. This is a technique for analyzing suppressed complexes in him. The 60s marks the beginning of outstanding changes in psychotherapy techniques and separating them from the traditional therapeutic methods. Psychologists found new methods in using various arts as activators for access to their treatment goals. In child psychology the experts focused on roleplaying and superficial games to help children overcome their mental problems.

People became curious about the demands of castaway groups and theater actors presented their capacities in a form useable in a therapeutic group. These experiences led to sufficient knowledge of this profession and establishment of the National Association for Drama Therapy (NADT) in 1979. People under long term care face various feelings. Since they are away from home and their beloved persons, they experience sort of castaway. Some suffer depression, believing that they are no more useful and cannot cooperate with others. Many of them live in seclusion that ultimately leads to distancing from reality. They must fight issues that make them return to the past, reviewing of life, death and life.

Drama therapy connects the external and internal world of these individuals. According to David Johnson, “the fancies and disappointments resulting from the entry of these individuals enter the person into an atmosphere to divide his previous personality from his youth dreams and adult capacities of the expected disappointment in his future personality.”

Therapists help the clients to grow better resistance mechanisms by encouraging them to build their internal and external worlds in order to be more successful in compatibility with the environment. Drama therapy creates a feeling of restarting life in the adults. The clients under care can forget their problems and be creative and useful. As drama therapy specialist Marlene Richman in Institute of Art Therapy says “lack of presence, that emergences chiefly at old age and retirement, can bring about loneliness and worthlessness. But by belonging to a happy group of drama the participants take constructive roles and find a feeling of being active, relations with others, and being valuable” (Landy, 1998).

IN the current age, we become more familiar with drama therapy. This is because man has always been seeking constructive roles to find his doubles, spirit and gods that live in our minds, in order to gain victory as before in hunting and dominion over green lands.

“The ritual dramas can be seen everywhere in the form of healing ceremonies, exorcism, The Lord’s Supper, Hindu ceremonies in the temples and commemoration of supernatural powers, ceremonies to make the youth ready for undertaking social responsibilities in the primitive societies and still modern societies. We know that religious rites and rituals, drama, supplications, and healing ceremonies have common aspects, all of which involve sort of worshipping and sanctification, and all of them possess drama specifications (Ebrahimian, 2000).

Psychodrama is a method of drama therapy. It was introduced by Jacob (1892-1974) in the United States, that is a magical method for the treatment of psychopaths. Psychodrama according to Moreno is “science which explores the “truth” by dramatic methods”, but how?

Moreno believed that role training and role playing and repetition and rehearsal of new strategies that seemed to be suffering in the first stage helps to anchor them.

In psychodrama it is called demonetization, i.e. destroying horrible state of things. Moreno has expressed this principle as “every true second time is the liberation from the first”. The first time means occurrence of the even in real world and the second time is the repetition and display of the same event. Therefore, if

Review Article

displaying a real issue, that was painful and sorrowful, soothes the pain, we must admit that “the thought of a real world, effects mind and spirit the same as the imagined reality.” This is also from Moreno and we must know that by imagination of a real world he means drama and theater” (Sattari, 1978).

CONCLUSION

Ever since art therapy began to grow in Europe, we are facing its various forms that are considered as the most important therapeutic aspects. In the course of art therapy, the artistic elements must be first, create rapid impacts, and secondly, need less skills and techniques. In the meantime, drama as an art with rapid connection with the mind and spirit can be used as an effective art in treatment since it creates behavioral reaction. Playwrights under the influence of Freud in the 20th century paid more attention to individual conflicts. The characters of the play fought with such issues related to individual identity, threats, defining their relations with others, and exploring meanings in a world that seemed to be contractual and illogical most of the time. Drama therapy as basis has had its impacts. Drama therapy connects the external and internal world of these individuals. The fancies and disappointments resulting from the entry of these individuals enter the person into an atmosphere to divide his previous personality from his youth dreams and adult capacities of the expected disappointment in his future personality. Therapists help the clients to grow better resistance mechanisms by encouraging them to build their internal and external worlds in order to be more successful in compatibility with the environment. Drama therapy creates a feeling of restarting life in the adults. The clients under care can forget their problems and be creative and useful. The major goal of drama therapy through roleplaying, meditation, ... is giving self-confidence to the patient to enable him live a healthy and happy life.

REFERENCES

- Azadivar Houshang (2000).** Relation of Physics and Metaphysics in the Art of Theater. *Art Quarterly* 21(46) Tehran.
- Ebrahimian Farshid (2000).** Theater and Beyond. *Art Quarterly* 21(46) Tehran.
- Landgarten Helen (1999).** *Clinical Art Therapy: A Comprehensive Guide*, translated by Kianoush Hashemian and Elham Abu Hamzeh (Mohajer Publications).
- Landy Robert (1998).** *Drama Therapy*, translated by Fariba Esmaeili (Center for Art Research and Study) Tehran.
- Liebmann Marian (2009).** *Art Therapy for Groups: A Handbook of Themes, Games and Exercises*, translated by Alizadeh Mohammadi and Tavakkoli Hourri (Qatreh Publications) Tehran.
- Sattari Jalal (1977).** Culture and People. *Theater Quarterly* (Spring) Tehran.
- Sattari Jalal (1978).** Psychodrama and New Theater. *Theater Quarterly* (3) Tehran.
- Yalom Irvin (2010).** *The Gift of Therapy*, translated by Habib Sepideh Version 5 (Qatreh Publications) Tehran.