

# ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH THE KIND PROBLEMS THAT HAVE A DESTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE ON THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND SOCIALIZATION

**ZHIVKO ZHECHEV**

SENIOR ASSISTANT PhD IN SOCIAL PEDAGOGY; THEORY OF EDUCATION AND DIDACTIC,  
SHUMEN UNIVERSITY "KONSTANTIN BISHOP OF PRESLAV"

**BULGARIA**

ZHIVKOZ@ABV.BG

**ABSTRACT:** THE ART THERAPY IS CONNECTED WITH THE ARTISTIC ASPIRATION THAT HELPS THE CHILDREN DEVELOP AWARENESS OF THEIR MOTIVES, NEEDS, FEELINGS, DESIRES AND OF THEIR OWN SELF. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN WITH DESTRUCTIVE PERSONALITY WHICH IS AN OBSTACLE FOR THEIR SOCIALIZATION. SUCH CHILDREN ARE THE ONES THAT SHOW SIGNS OF AGGRESSION, HYPER-CONFORMITY, AUTISM, AND GROWTH ISSUES; CHILDREN THAT INDUCE CONFLICTS AND HAVE DIFFICULTIES COMMUNICATING.

**KEY WORDS:** ART THERAPY, ART, AGGRESSION, HYPER-CONFORMITY, AUTISM, GROWTH ISSUES, CONFLICTS, CONFLICT (ADV.), CHILDREN INDUCING CONFLICTS, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

**T**HE art therapy is connected with different types of arts which shape the different therapy methods: drawing-therapy, music- therapy, dance- therapy, drama-therapy, photo-therapy, sand-therapy, fiction-therapy, etc.

**T**HE art therapy is a kind of social activity and socialization mechanism for children- it is connected with the stimulation of the children's artistic aspirations which helps them to develop awareness of their motives, needs, feelings, desires and of their own self. This is especially important for children with destructive personality which prevents them from socializing.

## **ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH SIGNS OF AGGRESSION**

"**AGGRESSION**" as a term has a quite vast meaning. In fact, all people posses certain amount of aggression which can serve for defense in given situations or in order to generate energy to accomplish certain tasks. Consequently when a person gets hyper-defensive, the boundaries of the healthy aggression are crossed. This results in conditions like hyperactivity, provoking or commanding behavior, psychogenic stuttering, violence, child anorexia, etc. [2], [5].

IN all these conditions two types of aggression can be observed: extroverted (towards others) and introverted (towards one's own self). For instance, a child that hits other children is aggressive towards them, however with this behavior he is also aggressive towards himself, as he will be sanctioned for misbehaving (he provokes the punishment). Another child might

temporarily release the tension in this way. The mission of the art therapist in this case is to help the child activate its social yearnings by finding more socially acceptable and more efficient for its mental harmony ways of coping with tension.

**T**HE art therapy concedes the methods to complete this task. For every child a specific assignment stimulating its social activity must be chosen, bearing in mind its special characteristics, desires and interests. The activity has to be both amusing for the child and giving him/her the space to express its symptoms. Whatever the activity the child should be able to freely express him/herself. This means that child should not only work on the given subject but also be able to choose freely.

#### **ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH HYPER-CONFORMITY**

**T**HE same way the children with obtrusive symptoms of aggression attract the attention of the specialists, the children that are too obeying and nice baffle them. Such children often don't have their own desires and thoughts and adopt those of someone else who has a great authority for them. These children are afraid of conflicts and this fear is the reason of turning their back to their own self and following the norms set by others [8]. Thus, they create a fake personality which is very fragile, because it is adopted by the outside world and not created from "the inside".

**I**N the case of hyper-conformity, which is also a type of social activity, through art therapy the revelation and development of the child's personality has to be stimulated. Often such children have a highly advanced intellect. In this case a tale-telling-therapy is appropriate, where the child can make up tales, puppet show scripts etc. by him/herself. Thereby, in an indirect manner, the child is given the responsibility of what the tale (its personal history) will be [6].

**U**NTIL this point of the paper, two condition categories have been described: aggression and hyper-conformity. But these can also be combined. There are common grounds between these two categories, as in every human being there are both aggression and a desire to be accepted and loved by others. One of the main differences between these two is the boundaries. While the children from the first category know no boundaries and norms, the children from the second category set two severe and enslaving limits.

#### **ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC SYMPTOMS**

**I**N this section we will examine the children that isolate themselves, can't include themselves in a group, prefer being alone and seem not to be touched by anything. For some reason these children can't face the outside world and the reality. Every intersection with the reality brings hem dissatisfaction and discomfort. Consequently the art therapy activities in this case have to be directed at helping the children find some satisfaction in the outside world [9].

**T**HE expression of self- isolation can be autistic (absolute denial of the outside world) as well as deeply depressive (the existence of the outside world is not denied, but nothing in it seems to make sense). In both cases these children need individual and multi-discipline help stimulating the social activity. The choice of adequate art therapy depends on what is tolerable for the child and what it will choose for him/herself [16]. In these cases the activities can only be suggested by the therapist and not imposed, as every attempt of pushing the child in some direction, as little as this attempt might be, can be seen as a severe interference.

**ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH GROWTH ISSUES**

**CHILDREN** with growth issues are very different not only because of their personal characteristics, but also because of the nature of their special features that need correction. The stimulation of their social activity through art therapy should be based on the following main principals. [8], [17]:

- ⇒ Not to forget the difficulties of the children;
- ⇒ All activities should be directed at the needed correction;
- ⇒ The behavior of the child during free assignments chosen according to the child's interests and conditions should be observed;
- ⇒ Creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and open communication with the child;
- ⇒ Constructive influence, strengthening the child's motivation, increasing its self-respect;
- ⇒ Easy and simple presentation of the child's problem in order to reach the needed result;
- ⇒ Regulating the child's behavior in time according to the period of its capabilities to concentrate and pay attention.

*There is a variety of art therapy methods for stimulating the social activity in the cases described in this paper and in different additional cases.* This includes the choice of subject, the usage of different materials (different colors, clay, etc.) and the methods of working with them. Everything depends on the child's condition, the nature of its problems, potentials, interests, etc., including its mood. The good pre-research of the child gives the possibility to indentify its problems- if these are psychological, neurological or others and to give art therapist a chance to decide on the methods he should use in its work with the child[4], [12], [15].

**THE** characteristics of the child in many cases can limit the search of adequate direction of influence. If the child has a very low level of intelligence, has difficulties speaking or understanding the task. In these cases the communication is complicated and therapeutic process is limited mostly to emotional influence. It might also be possible to reach some of the educational aims: engaging the sense perception, motion abilities, etc., where the therapeutic effect and the correction are very much interrelated.

**ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN GENERATING CONFLICTS**

**THROUGH** art and symbolic forms the art therapy enables the recreation of traumatic situations and conflicts and their solution. The art is a transforming power of overcoming fear and anxiousness resulting from existential conflicts. Such feelings hold the constructive social activity of the children and are a precondition for destructive social activity. The process of art therapy itself is fun and teaches its clients to express their feelings in a most spontaneous and random manner. In order to overcome interpersonal conflicts almost all of the existing art therapy techniques are being used. Their number is not limited, as it is connected with the interests and the talents of the people and in the same time the conflicts have a very wide range for research and shaping. [6], [8], [11], [14], [15].

**WITHIN** the known art therapy methods the most used ones are as follows: visual arts, music therapy, drama therapy, story-telling therapy, mask therapy, game therapy, color therapy, photo therapy, doll therapy, origami, etc.

**ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATIONAL DIFFICULTIES**

**A**n integral part of the art therapy is to stimulate the social activity, the normal development and the personal growth of the child which on its part improves its communicational skills. The healthy development of the body, the senses and the intellect of the child are a basis for a strong feeling for ego. Growing up the children understand that life is far from perfect and that they live in chaotic world full of contradictions. Besides, the people who bring the children up have their own problems which the children are competing with. The children learn to overcome difficulties and to use their compensating abilities which are the foundation of the social activities [10].

**A** great deal of the children that need help have one common characteristic: disturbed ability of establishing contacts. There are children who cannot effectively communicate with grownups, other children and their surroundings. In such cases the art therapist takes actions which provoke the child to share its feelings. As a result, the child starts getting along better with its relations. The therapist also works towards the following [3], [12]:

- ⇒ Finding its inner self;
- ⇒ Making the child tell real life stories, based on pictures it had previously painted.
- ⇒ Focusing on the fact that the child itself is the most important in the picture.

**ART THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH FEAR ISSUES**

**C**HILDREN can have different fears- loud and unexpected sounds, when they are abruptly woken up or when someone secretly sneak behind their back. Normally, these fears can be explained with the self-preservation instinct. *But children can fear innocent objects* and can get scared by anything [17]. Many of those fears don't appear to be connected with anything and seem inexplicable. For instance, a child can be afraid of both spiders and beautiful butterflies. There are children, who are afraid of clowns, because they hide their face. So where do these fears come from.

*It is possible that they adopt part of the fears of their parents and relatives.* If the mother is afraid of dogs there is a great chance that the child will also fear them. The same is true for the fear of storms or other natural calamities. The strong anxiety of the mother, who sees potential danger in everything that surrounds her child, might train a feeling of fear and exaggerated cautiousness. The warnings against danger at every step might make the child unsecure and living in expectation of something bad happening.

*Experiences connected with some form of fear hinder the social activity and the socialization of the children.* These fears can take different forms: fear of the dark, of loneliness or of fairy-tale characters. In this age the whole range of emotions is formed as well as protection habits and behavioral flexibility as a whole. Therefore, the fears should not be ignored especially the reasons for them. The most common fears at that age are the fear of loneliness, the fear of attack, and the fear of fairy-tale characters [13], [15].

*When the child is left alone with no support from his parents and relatives, it might get a feeling of danger and instinctive fear of the fairy-tale characters that threaten him/her. This locks its social activity and hinders the correct socialization.*

**I**N other words, the child doesn't feel protected enough to resist to the negative influence and the frightening images in its head. This is why it is so important for the child's relatives to show emotional sympathy. If the empathy is insufficient it might cause anxiety, mood swings and naughtiness aiming at attracting attention.

To influence positively the social activeness of the children with fear issues, the isotherapy seem to be the most suitable art therapy method of all [1].

**PICTURE-DRAWING** is a great way to develop the child's imagination, flexibility and creative thinking. In reality, children who like painting are more spontaneous in expressing their feelings. They can easily visualize the position of a figure or character and express their opinion. Through the picture the child communicates its feelings, wishes and dreams; restores the relationship in specific situations and establishes secure contact with some extreme, unpleasant and traumatic images.

BY viewing the picture and seeing the figure that caused this traumatic condition the child faces the fear again. However, with the help of the art therapist the child starts identifying him/herself with a positive and strong character and becomes a confident hero who fights evil: it cuts the dragons head, protects the family, destroys the enemies, etc. The child understands that it doesn't need to be afraid, gets the powers to fight for itself and develops a feeling of strength, heroism and bravery- this is the capability of withstanding evil, violence and fear. Thereby the child becomes capable of constructive social activity.

**THE** art therapy process improves the social activity as well as the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people of all ages. It is based on the belief that the art process takes part in the artistic self-expression and helps people solve conflicts and problems. It develops the interpersonal communicational capabilities and the control over one's behavior. It eases the stress levels, increases the confidence and the self-consciousness and helps getting enlightenment.

To sum up, art therapy integrates the human development with the visual arts (painting, pottery and other art forms) as well as the creative process with constructing models and psychotherapy. This enables the realization of the communication, which is closely interacting with the person's social activity- basic process for its beneficial flow.

**THE** art therapy process itself supports the socialization of every person in the following way:

- ⇒ Creative work which restores someone from its hurt and suffering;
- ⇒ Developing: social skills, strategies for anger management, solving conflicts, positive thinking as well as a lot other skills;
- ⇒ Solves the problem of people with a wide range of clinical cases, including people with heavy psychical diseases, dementia, traumas, depression, situations, where the person has a limited social activity and low chances for healthy socialization;
- ⇒ Effectively helps to solve conflicts, control aggression, heal trauma;
- ⇒ Supports the construction of different types of social communities;
- ⇒ Overcomes the social stress of losing a child or giving birth to a dead child. It contributes to healing sterility, tubal pregnancy, etc.;
- ⇒ Becoming conscious of one's own gender can also be a matter of art therapy;
- ⇒ It increases the social activity and the capability for socialization of imprisoned people, institutionalized juvenile delinquents, psychiatric facilities and probation centers.
- ⇒ It gives a chance to the ethnic minorities, which are trying to conserve their identity and are facing assimilation in a different social environment, to improve the parameters of their social activity and socialization.

**EVERY** art therapy influence aiming at motivating for social activity and increasing the chances for effective socialization starts with functional diagnostic of the client.

**THE** art therapy as a type of social activity and socialization mechanism for children is connected with the stimulation of the creative impulse, helping the children realize the motives, needs, feeling, wishes and their ego-image. The painting impulse itself, the work with texts or another art activity provokes the social activeness of the child; it activates its psychic style, which enables the emotional regeneration and the inclusion in the surrounding world trough:

- ⇒ Encouragement for work with art elements; decoding the non-verbal messages the art consists of;
- ⇒ Finding in oneself the ability to cope with life situations;
- ⇒ Activating the social skills of children suffering from different diseases: burnings, cancer, asthma, arthritis, digestion problems, children-clients who wound themselves, HIV positive children, etc.;
- ⇒ Therapeutic intervention for victims of violence in the social institutions and children which are trying to overcome the trauma of separation from the family;
- ⇒ Overcoming the children's communicational difficulties;
- ⇒ Easing as far as positive the negative behavior and the tension of autistic children, when they are willing to engage with art as a therapy;
- ⇒ Working with children that are victims of sexual abuse, with their families and with the sexual offenders;
- ⇒ Supporting the social activities of children from a disadvantaged background;
- ⇒ Easing the symptoms of stress disorder.

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SOCIOBRAINS