

DBT-oriented art therapy group for adolescents in intensive outpatient psychiatric care: finding paths for resistance & hope

DBT-inriktad bildterapi-grupp för ungdomar inom intensiv psykiatrisk öppenvård: Att hitta vägar för motstånd & hopp

Sara Stayne & Sophia Pankenier

Within child and adolescent mental health services many patients struggle with emotional regulation [ER] as well as understanding, differentiating, and expressing emotions. This can be related to maturity and development as well as to psychiatric disorders. Some might go on to be diagnosed with emotionally unstable personality disorder, in Sweden most commonly after the age of 18. In our context of day treatment within Stockholm's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Intensive Outpatient Unit patients often have complex psychosocial contexts alongside one or several psychiatric conditions.

In order to support these patients in recognizing and identifying their experiences and impressions, as well as developing skills in ER, we have adapted modules from dialectical behavioural therapy [DBT] and Suzanne Haeyen's programme, originally focused on ER for adults in group art therapy. The DBT-oriented art therapy group focuses on emotional regulation, interpersonal and mindfulness skills alongside introducing relevant DBT theory such as dialectics, validation, the biosocial model and Wisemind.

Now in its fourth series, the group participants are active in forging their own path of resistance and hope alongside helping to refine the language and form for the group moving forward. The participants in the DBT-oriented art therapy group suffer from depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, gender dysphoria as well as a high prevalence of trauma symptoms and neurodivergence, both ADHD/ADD and autism.

In group participants we see engagement both in grasping and applying theory, explaining it to one another and exploring it in relation to themselves. Several improvements to the group have come directly from group participants' suggestions including practical changes, development of the language, form and creative practice. Group members have described their experience of the group as a safe and non-judgemental space where creative expression can ease verbalization and reflection.

Biography

Sophia Pankenier is an art therapist with a bachelor's degree in Art and Design and a masters from the University of Umeå. She is also a registered nurse. She works as an art therapist at Stockholm Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day unit within the Intensive Outpatient Sector. Prior to becoming an art therapist, she worked extensively with vulnerable groups as an artist.

Sara Stayne is an art therapist, authorized by the Swedish Association of Art Therapists. She trained at the University of Hertfordshire, UK and now works at Stockholm Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day unit within the Intensive Outpatient Sector. She is also a registered CBT psychotherapist and registered occupational therapist. She has a long career working with complex childhood psychiatry.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Pankenier, S. & Stayne, S. (May 2022). Presentation (co-authored report): **Art Therapy grounded in neuroscience: evidence-based practice within healthcare**. Nordic Arts & Health Research Network Conference in Stockholm.

The fifty-fifty scenario: on affect regulation using the expressive therapies continuum.

In: V. Huet & L. Kapitan (eds), International advances in art therapy research & practice: the



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emerging picture (p. 336 – 346), Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Presented at the Inaugural International Art Therapy Practice/Research Conference in London in July 2019.