

Coping with homesickness: contact in art therapy

Gestionando la nostalgia del hogar: contacto en arteterapia

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Deciding to move abroad is paired with dreams and expectations of a better future. Migrating may prompt homesickness, which may in turn impact mental and physical health. Homesickness involves feelings of longing and grief for the home left behind and is influenced by the challenges of adjusting to the new environment. When migrating, contact is disrupted from familiar environments and social networks. Contact with self and the new environment may become challenging.

Art therapy encourages self-expression and reflection using art materials and techniques and considers a body-mind-emotion connection. To support adults coping with homesickness after migrating, a one-session art therapy intervention with a focus on contact was developed. A triptych was chosen as the central method, and diverse media were included. The intervention was tested individually in a quantitative pilot study with adults who immigrated voluntarily to Germany in a pre-post-test control group design. Homesickness was measured with the Dundee Relocation Inventory (Fisher, 2017). The final sample involved participants from nine different countries, which were randomly assigned to an experimental ($n = 7$) or a waiting control group ($n = 4$). A one-way ANCOVA revealed a significant group effect ($p = .041$, $\eta^2 = .42$), with the experimental group showing lower scores. The complete sample ($n = 11$) rated the intervention as highly engaging, meaningful, and supportive in coping.

The preliminary results suggest that art therapy may be implemented to support migrants experiencing homesickness, by creating space for contact with self and the environment in an expressive, reflective, and experiential way. Although the results are limited by the sample size, this work conceptually contributes to the interdisciplinary understanding of homesickness in migrants and delivers a proposal for action which may be considered in a broader context, such as community building.

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La decisión de mudarse al extranjero va acompañada de sueños y expectativas de un futuro mejor. Emigrar puede provocar sentimientos de nostalgia, que a su vez pueden afectar la salud mental y física. La nostalgia por el hogar implica sentimientos de añoranza y duelo y se ve afectada por las dificultades de adaptación al nuevo entorno. Al emigrar, se interrumpe el contacto con entornos familiares y redes sociales. Asimismo, el contacto consigo mismo y con el nuevo entorno puede resultar complicado. La arteterapia fomenta la autoexpresión y la reflexión utilizando técnicas artísticas y considera una conexión entre cuerpo, mente y emociones. Para gestionar la nostalgia, se desarrolló una intervención de arteterapia de sesión única enfocada en el contacto, con un tríptico artístico como método central. La efectividad de la intervención se examinó individualmente en un estudio piloto cuantitativo con adultos que inmigraron voluntariamente a Alemania, en un diseño pre-post-test con grupo de control. La nostalgia se midió con el Dundee Relocation Inventory (Fisher, 2017). La muestra final incluyó participantes de nueve países, asignados aleatoriamente a los grupos experimental ($n = 7$) o de control de espera ($n = 4$). Un ANCOVA unidireccional reveló un efecto de grupo significativo ($p = .041$, $\eta^2 = .42$); el grupo experimental presentó puntuaciones más bajas. Los participantes ($n = 11$) evaluaron la intervención como altamente atractiva, significativa y de apoyo en procesar la nostalgia. Los resultados preliminares sugieren que la arteterapia puede ser implementada para gestionar la nostalgia del hogar, creando un espacio para el contacto consigo mismo y con el entorno de una manera expresiva, reflexiva y experiencial. A pesar de limitaciones, como el tamaño de la muestra, este trabajo contribuye a la comprensión interdisciplinaria de nostalgia en migrantes y ofrece una propuesta de acción que podría aportar al desarrollo comunitario.

Biography

Eunice Morales was born 1992 in Aguascalientes, Mexico, and has lived in Hamburg since 2015. She received a BSc. in Psychology from the University of Hamburg and recently graduated with an M.A. in Expressive Arts Therapy at the Medical School Hamburg. She is



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