

## **The effectiveness of trauma-focused art therapy (TFAT) for psychological trauma: a multiple baseline single case experimental design**

Effectiviteit van trauma-focused art therapy (TFAT) voor psychologisch trauma: een multiple baseline single case experimental design

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Trying to psychologically process traumatic experiences is a major challenge faced by those who experience them. This ties in well with the theme of the conference: enduring dark times. Creating art can contribute to the ability to deal with psychological suffering. When someone, often after many years, starts with trauma therapy, connecting to these often long avoided or overwhelming experiences requires great courage.

As we know, art therapy is an often-employed therapeutic strategy for trauma in addition to psychotherapeutic approaches such as EMDR and narrative exposure therapy. Patients may benefit from art therapy because of its more indirect, nonverbal, experiential approach. In this presentation, we describe the findings of a study which examines the effectiveness of a 10-week individual trauma-focused art therapy (TFAT) intervention. This intervention focuses on both the dark times, by depicting negative memories, as well as on the light, by depicting positive memories. We will describe the intervention itself and the use of the mixed method multiple baseline single case experimental design (MBSCED), by which a total of 36 participants with psychological trauma were enrolled and studied. We will guide you through our results, which are both quantitative and qualitative, with measures of negative symptoms such as trauma symptoms (post-traumatic stress disorder check list; PCL-5) and depression (Beck depression inventory; BDI-II), as well as positive outcomes such as well-being (mental

health continuum, short form; MHC-SF), resilience (resilience scale; RS) and self-esteem (resilience scale). These were analysed with linear mixed models using the MultiSCED web application. Besides this, in-depth change process interviews were held with therapists and patients focusing on their experience and process within the trauma-focused art therapy. The interviews were thematically analysed using established qualitative methods. Artwork was collected and discussed in the interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the individual therapy processes.

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Traumatische ervaringen psychisch proberen te verwerken is een grote uitdaging waar degenen die deze meemaken voor staan. Dit sluit goed aan bij het thema van de conferentie waarin het gaat om het doorstaan van donkere tijden. Hierin kan het creëren van kunst bijdragen aan het vermogen om te kunnen gaan met psychologisch lijden. Wanneer iemand vaak na vele jaren begint met traumatherapie, vergt het verbinden met deze vaak lang vermeden of overweldigende ervaringen veel moed.

Zoals we weten, is beeldende therapie een vaak gebruikte therapeutische strategie voor trauma naast psychotherapeutische benaderingen zoals EMDR en narratieve exposuretherapie. Patiënten kunnen baat hebben bij beeldende therapie vanwege de meer indirecte, non-verbale, ervaringsgerichte benadering. In deze presentatie beschrijven we de bevindingen van een studie naar de effectiviteit van een 10-weken durende individuele Trauma-Focused Art Therapy (TFAT) interventie. Deze interventie richt zich zowel op de donkere tijden, door het verbeelden van negatieve herinneringen, als ook op de lichte tijden, door positieve herinneringen te verbeelden. We beschrijven ons onderzoek met daarin het gebruik van het multiple baseline single case experimental design (MBSCED), waarbij in totaal 36 deelnemers met psychologisch trauma werden geïnccludeerd en bestudeerd. We nemen jullie mee in onze resultaten, die zowel kwantitatief als kwalitatief zijn, met metingen van negatieve symptomen zoals *traumasymptomen* (Posttraumatische stressstoornis Check List; PCL-5) en *depressie* (Beck Depression Inventory; BDI-II) evenals positieve uitkomstmaten zoals *welzijn* (Mental Health Continuum, Short Form; MHC-SF), *veerkracht* (Resilience Scale; RS) en *eigenwaarde*

(Resilience Scale), die geanalyseerd zijn met linear mixed models met behulp van de MultiSCED webapplicatie. Hiernaast bestaan de resultaten uit *change process* interviews met therapeuten en patiënten, gericht op hun ervaring en proces binnen de Trauma-Focused Art Therapy. De interviews werden thematisch geanalyseerd. Beeldend werk werd verzameld en besproken in de interviews, om een dieper inzicht te krijgen in de individuele therapieprocessen.

## Biography

**Dr. Suzanne Haeyen** is Professor of the research group Arts & Body-based Therapies in Health Care at HAN University of Applied Sciences. She is coordinator of content of the Master program and art therapist at an expert center for personality problems. She has written several publications about arts therapies in personality disorders and contributed to national multidisciplinary guidelines for the treatment of personality disorders.

**Jackie Heijman** is a junior researcher of the research group Arts & Body-based Therapies in Health Care at HAN University of Applied Sciences. She is a visual art therapist and a psychologist in education. She has written several publications about compassion-focused art therapy, trauma focused art therapy and collecting and/or constructing art therapy interventions.

**Karin Schouten** is a visual art therapist working with refugees. She is the creator of the trauma-focused art therapy intervention (TFAT) and has previously performed a pilot study on its effectiveness for the refugee population. She has provided feedback during our study.

**Hans Wouters** is a research psychologist and epidemiologist. In the past 15 years he has studied a broad range of topics in the fields of psychiatry and geriatric medicine. He is affiliated to the research group Arts & Body-based Therapies in Health Care at HAN University of Applied Sciences where he employs various quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of arts and psychomotor therapies and their working mechanisms.

## Recent publications and conference presentations

Haeyen, S., Heijman, J., & Schouten, K.A. (2023). **The effectiveness of trauma-focused art therapy** [Presentation]. World Art Therapy Conference: 'Getting together art therapists and expressive arts therapists worldwide'. Febr. 4/5.

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