

Art in the Time of Pandemic: School Based Art Therapy at Home

Arnell Etherington Reader

The first 16 weeks of self-isolation in the UK saw at-risk primary aged children unable to come into school and the Art Therapy at Home Project was begun. Circumstances were unprecedented and references were few. The impact of arts, culture and therapeutic art interventions promotes mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing: helping children and adults respond adaptively to trauma, enhancing community cohesion and supporting children's home schooling at a time in history when these are jeopardized by the Covid-19 virus (Gupta, 2020; Johnson, 2020).

Every effort was made for continuity with 12 clients each week through Zoom: same day, same time. Problems arose: school and parent support for implementation, web cams/computers needed, Zoom training, new ethical consents, art materials at home, parents setting up Zoom, finding private space and challenges of this format for art psychotherapy, to name a few.

Children with anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, autistic spectrum behaviours, bereavement, etc. had to adapt to being at home with their parents all day (and vice versa), The pandemic fears and concerns were everyone's. Remembering how it had been with friends and relatives-especially grandparents who may play important roles in children's lives-made life more complex and brought more sorrow and worry. Mourning the loss of normal was 10-fold and showed up in anger, withdrawal, sadness or hyperactivity, angry outbursts and self-harm. All these feelings, along with the children's ongoing concerns, were held in individual, group, or family work in this new space.

The poster session will highlight the Art Therapy at Home programme, illustrated by examples and discussion of sessions, photographs of children's artwork, web cams use, handouts of legal and ethical consents developed, an extended essay, materials list given to parents and a short interview video. These may be helpful to therapists' ongoing work.

References

- Gupta, N. (2020) Singing away the Social distancing Blues: Art therapy in a time of coronavirus. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 60(3): 593-603.
Johnson, H. (2020) Arts and culture in a 'new normal'. *Psychologist*. Jul/Aug: 100-105.

Biography

Arnell Etherington Reader, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at the Graduate Art Therapy Psychology Department, Notre Dame de Namur University lecturing for 25 years. She is an art psychotherapist and clinical psychologist. Having moved to the UK 11 years ago, she lectures at Art Therapy Northern Programme, sees private clients, works in two primary schools and offers international workshops. She is a writer and painter.

Recent publications and conference presentations

2020: Workshop: Back to Our Beginnings: Honouring the Land, the Soul, and a Knowing: an Aboriginal perspective painting process workshop, Conference of Northern California Art Therapy Association.

2020: Paper presentation: Autism Vignette. British Art therapy Association, Region 5, Autism Conference.

2019: Workshop: Chasing Windmills for Truth...Using Doll Making to Explore Where Cross-Culture Meets Shadow, European Consortium of Creative Arts Therapy Education (ECArTE) Conference. Madrid, Spain.

2017: Presentation workshop: Parting is such sweet sorrow, Or is it? Closing the Art Therapy Space at Termination in Art Therapy? American Art Therapy Association conference.

2010: Workshop: If the Shoe fits...Family therapy Technique 1/10. Internationalization of Creative Arts Therapy, Singapore