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EXPRESSIVE ART THERAPY- A TOOL FOR ECOCENTRIC LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Expressive art therapy is a multimodal holistic health mediation that mobilizes creative expression in the healing both mind and body. It is especially well suited to the person who lack the ability to communicate their inner world with words alone. These persons can use the many forms of creative arts to express themselves. Now a day's nature-assisted expressive art therapy is an emerging therapeutic method for environmental health and establishing more harmonious and mutually supporting relations of humans with nature. Hence the present study was attempted with the help of nature assisted expressive art therapy to make the world of more sustainable living for humans.

KEYWORDS

Expressive art therapy, Ecocentric life, Young adults and Green studio.

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INTRODUCTION

Art has a strong influence on environmental preservation and human responsibility on it. Artworks are essential tools for ecological activism that cause awareness among the population. It facilitates understanding the sustainability, and help people to work for this cause. Art can address the environmental issues such as conservation, sustainability and preservation of biodiversity. Art has the ability to interact with and educate the viewer about these issues, spreading awareness about such important topics.

Ecological or nature-assisted expressive arts therapies represent an emerging therapeutic method, based on the new understanding of the role of the arts in providing public and environmental health and explore more harmonious and mutually-supporting relations of humans with

nature (Kopytin, 2021)¹. It stimulates creative environmental activity as a form of coping behaviour that strengthens protective and adaptive mechanisms (Oleg, 2021)².

Art processes are essentially life-enhancing, therefore they can be used with great efficacy in ecological work (Maureen, 1998)³. Art processes can be used to reclaim our memories and imaginations through building relationships with nature. Eco psychologists such as Conn (1995)⁴ recommend that their clients spend time in nature looking, listening, smelling, moving and drawing. Fostering an Ecological Identity can ameliorate feelings of isolation.

Art can help renew our connection with nature. The combination of art and environmental activism are more impressive when it communicating messages with solution, which act directly on preserving the environment. The Expressive art therapy with a natural materials helps to build the relationship with natural world. Hence the present study is framed to provide valuable suggestions for an eco-centric sustainable world through expressive art therapy.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 15 children were selected among 8 - 12 yrs. age group from various villages of Kanyakumari District. A small sample number was chosen for the purposes of this interpretive research design. The purpose for this current study was to explore the effectiveness of expressive art therapy have been practiced in the field, how they are shown beneficial when working with the young mass. Students were then invited to attend in person for the 5 various Activities.

Activity 1: Home Gardening

The participants were trained to grow the vegetables because they will quickly see the results of growing salad leaves and vegetables. Along with this they were practiced to grow some medicinal herbs, flowering plants and allowed them to make a pond with pot. To make it more effective, after the training the following steps were practiced by the participants.

The participants were allowed to choose and arrange a place for their home garden to induce the interest and divert their concentration.

The participants were given freedom to choose the plants on their own to make them feel independent.

An informative session about the benefits of soil was conducted and made them prepare the soil for planting in order to make them feel rejuvenated.

The participants were planting their chosen plants in different vegetative propagation methods which allowed them to know the interesting facts about the nature.

The participants were instructed to decorate the garden with their own ideas such as pond with an old pot to trigger the eagerness to continue the process.

They were instructed to check and take care of their garden every day to know the level of growth in the plants and in their mental health. Also they were trained to do meditation in their own garden to feel the aesthetic essence of the nature.

The participants cultivated good amount of vegetables namely tomato, onion, green chili, brinjal, ladies finger, corn, cucumber, mint, dwarf copperleaf spinach.

Activity 2: Usage of organic products

Organic foods are a great choice of antioxidants, and they are also devoid of harmful chemicals, so during the study period the participants were allowed to have the organic food like millets, cereals, smoothie fruits, yogurts, multi grain biscuits, cereal flakes, sprouts etc. and they are advised to use jute bags, bamboo or wooden chairs, containers made from wood, hand crafted decor items, etc. Following steps were taken into action to implement it.

The participants were asked to eat the organic food from their home garden itself.

They were given training

To make bag out of jute fibre and paper.

To make containers using wood and palm leaf.

To make crafts using paper, palm leaf, sand, stones and leaves.

At the end of the training they were advised to use all the organic products they made instead of using synthetic items.

Activity 3: Paper Making

In order to recycle the waste products, the participants are allowed to make paper from various products such as old newspaper, tissue paper, magazines, wrapping paper, paper grocery bags, flower petals, small seeds, plant fibres, thread, leaves, cotton pieces, etc.

The following steps were taken into practice.

Participants were asked to bring some waste papers and tear them into piece.

They were asked to soak the teared papers in water for about a day.

The participants were given a net to gradually dip in the paper Mache.

They allowed the paper Mache to gather evenly on the surface of the net.

The net was taken out of the water with the paper Mache layer and was dried to get the recycled paper.

At the end of the paper making, participants were instructed to draw something in the paper that they made to enhance the confidence in their own ability.

Activity 4: Green Studio

The participants were instructed to make art installations with leaves, sticks, sea shell, sand, stone and so many naturally available materials during the study period. A fine day participants were taken into a forest and instructed to create a landscape in the soil surface using leaf, feathers, sand and pebbles. They were instructed to collect the clod with some grass and spread out in the soil to look like green pasture. They gathered and arranged some dried leaves to portray some animal's structures and bark pieces as rocks. They have used some pebbled as bark of a tree and feathers as leaves. Some feathers were set as clouds in the soil. At the end, the participants were very happy to see the small green landscape that they have created. This green studio activity was done to create an inspiration among the participants to create and live an ecocentric life.

Activity 5: Clay Art

Clay is the one of the most important activity to improve the hand-eye coordination in the children, hence the selected participants were trained to collect the clay from their own village itself and with it they made pot, pen holder, jewel box, flower vas, etc.

DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

Data gathering was done with standard Questionnaires like Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Geriatric Depression Scale, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Beck Anxiety Inventory to determine the effect of expressive art therapy on eco centric life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study brings tremendous changes in the day today activities of the participants towards the eco centric life and the changes were summarized below:

All the participants were mentally and physically improved with all the five sessions, because the activities like clay art, gardening and making green studio were decreased their stress, Depression, anxiety, fear, etc. In order to improve their health, different millets were provided for their food throughout the study period, there by the frequency of cold, cough, etc. Were decreased. It indicated that their immune system was absolutely boosted.

The participant's awareness regarding the natural resources of their own village was improved. So throughout the study period they were collected all the materials from their native places only. Due to the less awareness about global warming, before the study period the participants were used huge amount of plastics, but in the entire study period they were restricted from the usage of plastics and it was replaced with organic product like paper bags, wooden and earthen containers, etc. It improves the consciousness regarding the protection of natural resources.

Before the study period, the children were spending more time with mobile phones and video games, but after all the sessions they realized their wastage of time and the decreased mental and physical health of them. During the study period, all these activities promote a child's creativity, exploration, expression, creativity and imagination.

During the study period the social responsibilities and relationship were fabulously increased. Before the study period due to the economic status some of the children were running their life in an isolated

way. That was decreased slowly among the children by appreciating each other in every activities of expressive art therapy. Their self-esteem and happiness were fabulously increased. It also increases the research mentality, eco centric spirituality, etc.

The current study amplified the development of different skill among the children to prepare useful things made from clay, wood, recycled waste, thereby it improves the economic status and make them as young entrepreneurs.

Discussion

The expressive art therapy supports the participant's capabilities to interact with natural resources and the environment through contemplation and meditation on natural objects and environments, and more actively through creative environmental activity and taking care of the environment.

Our current study goes in line with Roszak (2001)⁵ he stated that nature assisted arts therapies can provide experiences of becoming embedded in the ecosystem and empathic attuning to the living environment and different forms of life. This process has the potential to allow us to actualize and bring to the conscious mind certain aspects of the human experience, in particular, those related to our biological history and our ecological unconsciousness.

Adelman and Castricone 1986⁶, emphasizes the value of art therapy as one of the means of overcoming social isolation, since it provides an opportunity to use nonverbal means of communication as psychologically safer than verbal communication.

Our study also develops empathy, identification and subjectification of natural objects during participant's interaction with natural objects and environments this cultivates their subjective attitude to nature.

Cantoper (1999)⁷ notes that art therapy allows one to overcome defence mechanisms in the form of denial of problems, intellectualization and suppression of difficult experiences. In a similar fashion, the participant's isolated way of life was gradually decreased during the study period.

In addition, the ecological art therapy approach allowed for the actualization and awareness of spiritual meanings values etc. It encouraged the development of the participants' Eco identity. While our younger community is striving for this transition, ecological art therapies can play a key role in helping them and the entire societies to survive, be healthy and form a confirmatory response to the restrictions in environmental and natural resources. The use of various sessions in this therapy is said to be an important ingredient of change, as it can stimulate mental flexibility regarding the ecocentric life.

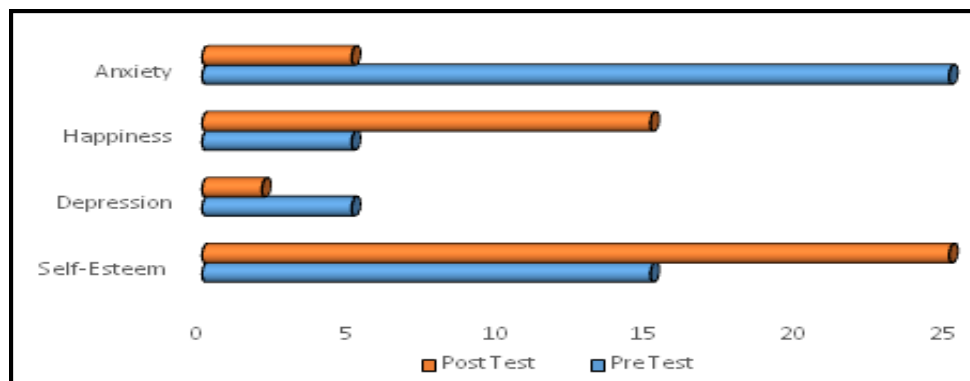


Figure No.1: Comparison of Pre and Post-activity

CONCLUSION

Since the rare research works regarding the eco centric life with the help of expressive art therapy, the author took an initiative to create an awareness among the younger generation. It may pave a way for the beginners who work with the same topic.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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