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The impact of Art therapy and the pandemic

by: Zoneyda Flores

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Braus, M., & Morton, B. (2020). Art therapy in the time of COVID-19. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 12(S1), S267–S268. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/10.1037/tra0000746>

This article discusses the impact that the Covid-19 virus had on mental health. During the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were many quick changes that led to anxiety, stress, and depression that were affecting individuals, losing them or having to take care of family members. The article highlighted an effective and beneficial outlet was art therapy. The article defined art therapy as a way of healthy outlets that can consist of coping mechanisms for self-care. Offering many benefits to the well being of individuals, like feeling isolation. Braus' focus was to highlight the impact of isolation on an individual's mental health during the pandemic and how art therapy would benefit them.

Ceaușu, F. (2018). Fine Arts: 6. The Healing Power of Art-Therapy. *Review of Artistic Education*, 16(1) 203-211. <https://doi.org/10.2478/rae-2018-0022>

This article focuses on the greater benefits that the form of therapy through art provides an individual, and the various countries that have utilized the positive interventions of art therapy. In China and Japan, they found the effectiveness that art played in healing individuals with mental illness. Although they found art to be effective, they also explored and identified how certain colors and chromatics can be triggering, causing a negative impact and determining that not all forms of art can be presented to individuals at a therapeutic level of intervention. Medical research has been going on and has strengthened that art therapy could be a way of treatment in physical or psychological illnesses. The author focused on

experiments with a positive outcome that took place in Leningrad, Russia. In Leningrad, the experiment consisted of placing individuals to view artwork of well known artists, such as Goya, Braque, and Rodin, from 5-10 times a day by projecting it on a wall or going to the museum . This experiment was found to be favorable in reducing physiological and psychological states of distress. The author, Ceausu, provided research that found how important the efficacy of art therapy was in Romania during the 90's which led to Romania pushing to make it an official profession. "The official recognition of the profession of art therapist, after graduating master studies, offers knowledge and develops new skills and professional abilities and helps the students to be competitive in a continuous growing market," (Ceausu, 2018). The benefits of art therapy, in the article, is self transformational. "The positive values of understanding and basis of exploration," (Ceausu, 2018). In this article Ceausu captured not only the effectiveness of art therapy in adults, but also how the expression through art for children was truly dynamic and symbolic for children in communication during their treatment.

Jordan S. Potash, Debra Kalmanowitz, Ivy Fung, Susan A. Anand & Gretchen M.

Miller (2020) Art Therapy in Pandemics: Lessons for COVID-19, *Art Therapy*, 37:2, 105-107, DOI: [10.1080/07421656.2020.1754047](https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2020.1754047)

In the time of Covid-19, people experienced several emotions ranging from scared, nervous, anxious, and stressed. Every place was shutting down, people were being let go, parents had to homeschool their children and people were introduced to zoom. During the pandemic, everyone switched online, especially medical health

professionals and this is where therapy comes into play, especially art therapists. Art therapists were actually supporting one another, especially those who had experienced other global viruses, like ebola and SARS. Miller's focal point was maintaining a relationship and creating a community through supporting one another through social media and network during the time of viruses. Through social media and networking, it can hold access to anyone wanting to make art or engage with art therapists and artists everywhere.

Muller, Ashley, Hafstad, E., & Himmels, Jan., et al. (2020). The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare workers and interventions to help them. *https://www.sciencedirect.com/Journal/Psychiatry-Research*. Retrieved 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165178120323271>.

The article was mainly focused on healthcare workers feeling nervous and stressed during the COVID-19 virus and the impact on their mental health. COVID-19 virus affected millions of people, especially healthcare workers who were at an increased rate of getting infected. Many were impacted mentally as well with anxiety, sleep disorders, depression and PTSD. In this article, Muller, Hafstad, Himmel, et al., were focusing on a rapid systematic review to assess the health being affected during the COVID-19 virus on healthcare workers, by changes over time, mental health problems, and the strategies to aid in their mental health. "We conducted a rapid systematic review according to the methods specified in our protocol, published on our institution's website," (Muller et al., 2020). The results were a literature review and studies, using interviews, seen as qualitative and quantitative

research. 59 studies from 91 countries participated and the studies were to focus on the characteristics of individuals in healthcare. During these studies, six studies were to explore mental health interventions with workers initiating it, but the problems were with stigma. Muller's, et al., focus was to make a point in having more research on healthcare workers and how impactful it is to make sure their mental health is being treated well.

Rubin, J. A. (2015). *Introduction to art therapy: Sources & resources*. Routledge

The introduction to art therapy is ever growing and is developing into its own field and is still evolving today. There is no one definition of what art therapy is, it is an expression of what individuals feel through art making. For others, it might be a useful coping mechanism to stay busy and for other people a way to relax and reflect on the work you have done. The book introduced us to the simplicity of art therapy and how it brought sensitivity and sophistication to people. "Art therapy, a complex of creative events" is what Rubin calls it. It's a complex of drawing, painting, sculpting, ceramic, weaving, photography, and so much more. The main point of "Introduction to Art Therapy," is how it makes people feel.

Arrgarwal , S. (2021). The Effects of art and music on stress and anxiety levels in adolescents .

Retrieved 2022 From <https://eds-b-ebshost-com.ezproxy.whittier.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=5c806a95-e234-493f-858c-afd3927e8ece%40redis>.

The effects of art and music have been very beneficial to some people. Especially art, art therapy has grown rapidly and is reaching more areas. Its main focus is to help with cognitive, behavioral which includes language, memory and problem solving. In fact, music therapy has been useful and beneficial as well, especially on the mind, body and emotions. This article helps and finds healthy coping mechanisms by having adolescents join in music classes that are offered to them and even art classes, giving them distress and a time to reflect and relax.

The covid-19 virus is still affecting many people and there's not a lot of research studies on mental health resources, especially art therapy and pandemic in the key words, but I was able to find some main points through my research. I've learned about self-compassion and that art therapy can reduce anxiety, well-being and social connection and helps people who are at an increased rate of depression and isolation. This is useful in society today because we are still in the pandemic and much of the population is affecting their mental health. That is why art therapy continues to grow and become more developed. I've learned this through art expression in a community setting with the Salvation Army center in Whittier. I was given the opportunity to give lessons to families in the Salvation Army Community Center through zoom. I'd hoped I would be there for any help, but did not want to risk families getting sick. The individuals I helped were so grateful and shared the artwork they did to create community through art. Another experience I shared was SHG, Self Help Graphics and Art, which is a community for serving art classes and combining social justice to the youth. I was able to participate in Soy Artista which spanned for 6 weeks, learning different art making techniques. Screenprinting, tie-dye, making your own stamp, photographing your art, and learning how to stitch and make your own clothes. It created, for me personally, a reflection of me, I was able to talk to people around my own age, create something with a whole group of people, and make some friends out of it as well. This is what the covid-19 and the pandemic took away from us, the community and feeling isolated. This is why art therapy is so impactful because it creates a reflection of an artwork of individuals creating it.

