

Application of Art Therapy Theory and Technology in College Students' Mental Health Education Course

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Abstract: How to better carry out mental health education for college students and improve their psychological quality is an important topic that university psychologists are constantly thinking about and exploring. With the increasing application of art therapy in college students' mental health education, art therapy has gradually become an important means and method of mental health education in universities. This article attempts to conduct further research on the application of art therapy theory and technology in the mental health education curriculum for college students. The article will mainly analyze the application of music therapy, literary therapy, and painting therapy in the mental health education curriculum for college students. Art therapy, which integrates art and psychology, attempts to combine art and mental health education. It leverages the synergy of different art genres, exploring new courses and methods. By integrating teaching with practice, this approach enables students to participate actively, allowing them to truly become protagonists. Incorporating art therapy into mental health education courses can effectively enhance the enjoyment and applicability of mental health education.

1. Introduction

In recent 20 years, art therapy, as a formal psychotherapy method, has been paid more attention to and has developed in the field of psychology. Both domestically and internationally, experts have gradually realized its great potential and unique efficacy in psychotherapy. As a result, the theories and methods of art therapy have attracted increasing attention and discussion in mental health education and consultation in colleges and universities. In July 2021, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the Notice on Strengthening the Management of Students' Mental Health. This notice demanded schools to further improve the pertinence and effectiveness of students' mental health work and to strive to improve students' mental health [1-2]. However, in the practical teaching of mental health education in colleges and universities, several problems have arisen, such as a "single classroom teaching mode", a "lack of embodiment and interaction in teaching courses", and an "insufficient focus on positive psychological aspects in teaching concepts". How to better carry out mental health education for college students and improve their psychological quality has become an important topic for college psychologists to constantly think about and explore [3]. With the increased application of art therapy in college students' mental health education, art therapy has been recognized as an essential tool and method for mental health education in colleges and universities. In this context, this paper seeks to further study the application of art therapy theory and technology in college students' mental health education courses. Art therapy, which has the unique characteristic of nonverbal communication, allows artistic activities to create a safe and free atmosphere for participants. This atmosphere helps to reduce their inner defenses, and artistic expression integrates both time and space [4]. Depending on the art forms employed, art therapy can be classified into several types including painting therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, ceramic therapy, artistic modeling therapy, drama therapy, poetry therapy, reading therapy, and cultural therapy. Art therapy, bridging art and psychology, aims to combine art with mental health education, maximizing the synergistic effects of various art forms and exploring innovative courses and methods [5-6]. By integrating teaching with hands-on practice and allowing students to actively participate, becoming true protagonists in their healing journey,

this approach can effectively enhance both the interest in and application of mental health education. This provides a fresh perspective and opens up new avenues for the reform of the mental health education curriculum in colleges and universities [7].

2. The Concept and Characteristics of Art Therapy

Art therapy, also known as art therapy, is a special psychological treatment method that differs from traditional talk therapy. This therapeutic approach uses art as a special form of expression during the consultation process to help visitors improve themselves and discover potential solutions and methods to cope with problems[8]. Proponents of the humanistic art therapy school believe that individuals' emotions and feelings can be released and transformed through artistic creation. Through the process of artistic creation, these individuals can explore self-awareness, self-understanding, and achieve growth. Thus, the process of artistic creation itself acts as a form of healing[9]. From the perspective of art psychology, experts suggest that art satisfies the need for the release of suppressed psychological energy. It manifests as the materialization of the imagery activity associated with energy release. In the realm of art, there is a pursuit of the self-realization of emotional forms and the sublimation of various suppressed desires. The process of art appreciation fundamentally constitutes an emotional activity that resonates with the human soul. At all times, artistic expression stands as the most natural manifestation of human inner emotions [10]. According to professionals in the field, art therapy can be summarized as a method that allows visitors to use various forms of art for self-expression and projection, all while being accompanied by a trained therapist. This therapy creates a free, safe, and supportive environment for visitors, enabling them to release their emotions, express their feelings, and achieve personal transformation and growth through the use of various artistic methods. Art therapy involves the use of metaphors, narratives, paintings, theatrical performances, and other artistic methods to address emotional stresses in individuals. From a creative perspective, experts believe that this therapy can facilitate interpersonal communication, provide a psychological outlet, and offer psychotherapeutic benefits. The distinct characteristics of art therapy can be categorized into four main aspects, as depicted in Figure 1.

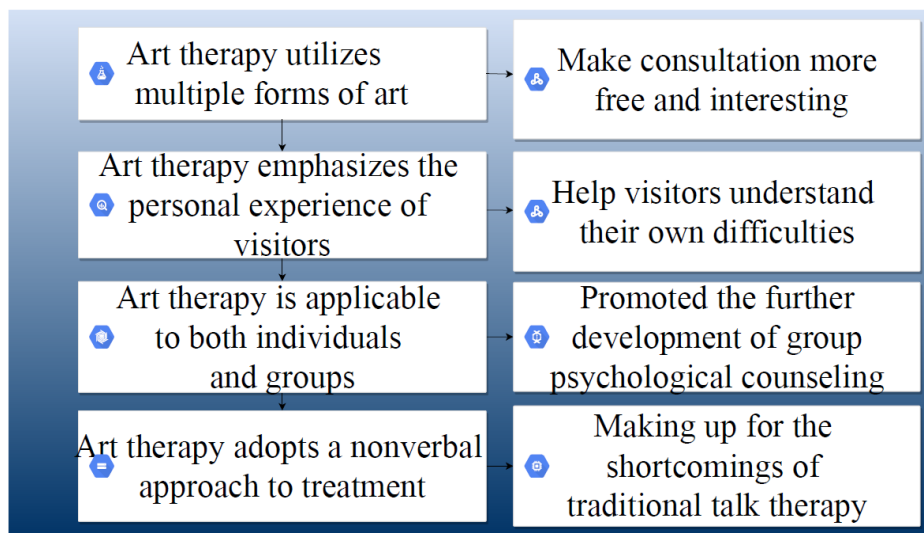


Figure 1 Characteristics of Art Therapy

The value and function of art therapy lie in its ability to help clients release, adjust, transfer, and sublimate their emotions. This enables them to transcend their living difficulties, eliminate mental obstacles, break away from old psychological schemas, and improve their personality. Through the use of artistic communication and expression, and by creating a free, relaxed, and safe atmosphere, educators can ensure that students realize life understanding, experience pressure relief, achieve self-improvement, facilitate emotional release, and address problems during their creative process.

3. Analysis on the application of art therapy theory and technology in college students' mental health education curriculum

Based on the different art forms utilized, art therapy encompasses a variety of methods, including music, dance, drama, poetry, painting, sculpture, film, calligraphy, and so on. Currently, the art therapy methods commonly adopted in colleges and universities are music therapy, literature therapy, and painting therapy. The primary modalities of art therapy can be categorized into three types, as depicted in Figure 2.

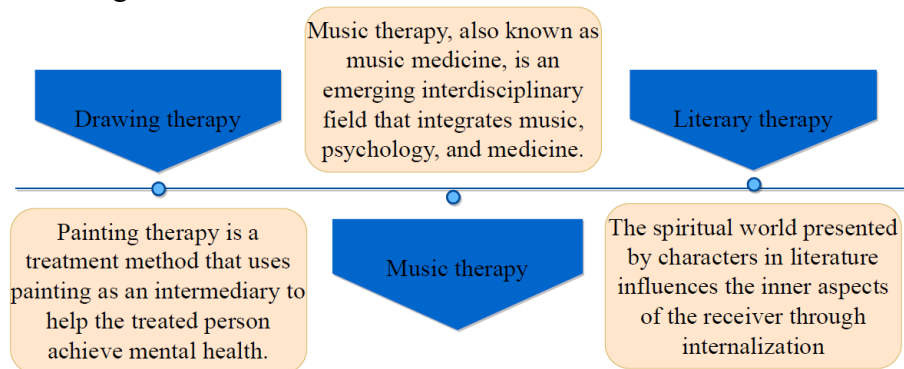


Figure 2 Main Forms of Art Therapy

The application of any psychotherapy requires consideration of the visitor's defense and resistance. For college students who are not interested in art forms such as music, painting, dance, or have obvious resistance, art therapy may not be suitable. At the same time, some art students, due to their professional experience in art education, have evaluative considerations for artistic creation, making it difficult for them to fully immerse themselves in the process of art therapy. Therefore, they may not be suitable for using art therapy. This chapter mainly conducts further research on the application of music therapy, literary therapy, and painting therapy in mental health education courses for college students.

3.1. Application Design of Music Therapy

Music hits people's hearts with its unique beauty and rhythm. Music therapy is the use of music to stimulate the senses, vent emotions, and soothe the soul, with the goal of restoring, maintaining, and improving individual psychological and physical health. Music therapy materializes stable, positive, and upward personality characteristics into music, thus infecting people's hearts, activating subconscious creativity, and achieving the goal of self-improvement. At present, the course of mental health education in colleges and universities basically adopts the form of large class teaching. This format has the advantages of high efficiency in knowledge dissemination and wide coverage. However, its more traditional teaching form makes students feel less involved, easily bored, and lacking effective interaction space and time between teachers and students. Therefore, it is crucial to improve the quality of mental health education courses by enhancing students' initiative and enthusiasm in classroom participation through music. By integrating music therapy, the mental health classroom is no longer a simple unilateral communication between teachers and students. Students can listen to music according to the teaching content under different psychological themes such as emotions, interpersonal relationships, love, and self-awareness. Under the guidance of teachers, students can experience and feel. Creating natural scenes makes students more willing to interact, truly express themselves, actively participate, and integrate into the collective. Through the guidance of artistic creation, they can identify problems, think about them, and find solutions, thus gaining common knowledge and improving their personality. The sharing session provides an opportunity for everyone to discuss and share their feelings. During the reconstruction phase, individuals can identify their own problems through the collision between the musical journey and their thoughts, and then reintegrate themselves. Following the teacher's guidance, artistic creation is carried out according to specific requirements, integrating music thinking on different psychological themes. Classroom interaction is strengthened as students express their works to vent emotions and

deepen self-awareness.

3.2. Application Design of Literary Therapy

The spiritual world presented by characters in literature influences the inner aspects of the receiver through internalization, causing the latter to unconsciously correct their own negative emotional tendencies with referential support. The psychological course for college students integrating literary therapy is designed with artistic creation achievements as the basis for forming project teams. In class, students are grouped based on psychological modules such as self-awareness, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and other psychological themes. Additionally, artistic creation achievements such as microfilms, picture books, comics, and fixed animation are grouped based on their accomplishments. Students are then matched to form project teams to promote artistic psychological healing creation. There are two specific ways to operate literary and artistic therapy. One way is to listen to literary works. For example, many mental health textbooks have selected numerous inspirational works for students to read. Collaborative project groups can actively and effectively stimulate creative enthusiasm within the group. This is because the assessment of mental health courses in literary therapy is no longer solely based on test papers; the achievements created by the project teams can also serve as an important basis for the final evaluation. Consequently, students will be more willing to integrate the knowledge acquired from mental health courses into artistic creation, expressing the thoughts of group members on psychological health topics such as self-awareness, personality shaping, interpersonal relationships, and love through artistic forms. Another approach is to express and write psychological essays. Psychological essays are based on the theme of the course and involve assigning writing tasks that require students to express their psychological activities in the form of essays. They use the methods provided by the teacher to identify unreasonable beliefs, analyze and debate them, and then re-establish reasonable beliefs to achieve the goal of improving knowledge, emotions, intentions, and actions.

3.3. Application design of painting therapy

From the perspective of all-round education, the college students' mental health course integrating artistic psychological therapy should adhere to educating people with the heart and benefiting the heart with beauty. Therefore, painting provides a tool to externalize personal feelings, and through it, it affects the original solid self-defense. As an effective self-analysis technology, painting analysis is an effective psychological test and psychotherapy method. Applying it to mental health courses can guide students to think deeply about self-awareness, improve their self-awareness level, and promote the healthy development of college students' personality. Educating people with heart means achieving the actual effect of psychological education by mobilizing the educational resources based on the school curriculum, while benefiting students with beauty means deepening their self-awareness in aesthetic education practice, thinking about the relationship between themselves and society, and giving full play to the educational advantages of art. Teachers should carefully choose specific aesthetic values and art media as teaching methods according to the teaching content and students' interests, hobbies, needs, and their ability to feel art. This will guide students to have an internal dialogue with art. Once a student enters the artistic situation, they will creatively understand human nature and their own life beliefs at greater depths. The application of painting therapy does not require students to have a basis in painting. They can draw what they think, fully express their inner feelings, and freely vent their emotions. Through the analysis of the works, students can understand, comprehend, and enrich their emotions, as well as adjust and enhance their self-awareness. Colleges and universities should provide students with a platform to carry out social aesthetic education practice. Teachers of mental health courses should provide students with ideas and methods of artistic psychological healing, and students should master the basic methods and healing concepts of painting therapy. They can then integrate these concepts into art education and collaboratively develop innovative social aesthetic education courses.

4. Conclusions

With the continuous development and improvement of the theory and practice of art therapy, forms such as painting therapy, music therapy, handcrafting, personality masks, campus psychological dramas, and others have increasingly become new means of psychological counseling and mental health education for college students. In this article, we attempt to conduct further research on the application of art therapy theory and technology in the mental health education curriculum for college students. Art therapy emphasizes nonverbal aspects, but in order to make the subconscious conscious and effective, it ultimately requires the use of language. Understanding and reflecting on the process of artistic creation, as well as free association and in-depth exploration of artistic works, can better assist visitors and achieve the goal of psychological therapy. It is important to establish classroom ethics and norms in course teaching. In communication, analysis, and sharing with groups or the entire class, it is necessary to establish norms in advance: first, the principle of confidentiality; second, respect for others' works; third, not prying into privacy; and fourth, specific precautions during the creative process. This article integrates art and psychology into artistic psychological therapy, which is a powerful means of interactivity, effectively reducing students' psychological defense and helping students to self-help and grow together. Whether in classroom teaching, campus activities, or extracurricular volunteer service practices, it can become an effective way for college students' mental health education.

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