A Comprehensive Neurorehabilitation-Informed Art Therapy Approach for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury

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Goals of Art Therapy with TBI Survivors

● Goal #1: Introduction, engagement, rapport
  ○ Considerations: neurobiology, physical disabilities
  ○ Objectives: attunement, safety, engagement, exploration, nonverbal expression
    - Interventions: Introduce Daily Check-In, Back-and-forth drawing, scribble drawing, free exploration (model magic, kinetic sand, modeling clay)

● Goal #2: Assessment and goal setting
  ○ Considerations: disabilities, concentration, attention, resistance
  ○ Objectives: assessment, empowerment
    - Interventions: BATSE, DATA, clock drawing, copy tasks, BGT, (other modified assessment)

● Goal #3: Address treatment goals
  ○ Considerations: compensatory strategies, trauma processing, self expression, psychosocial needs, abstraction/insight
  ○ Objectives: affective engagement & regulation, community/social engagement, hope & growth
    - Interventions: daily check-in, sketchbook/logbook, emotion wheel/representations

● Goal #4: Termination
  ○ Considerations: effects of deficits on generalizability & follow-through
  ○ Objectives: discharge plan, support SAP, support higher QOL

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

● Caused by external force/insult to the head, which results in a disruption in the function of the brain, and can lead to disability and/or death.
  ■ penetrating or closed
  ■ focal or diffuse
  ■ mild- severe

● Acquired brain injury’s (ABI) occur after birth, but not as a result of external force (stroke, seizures, etc).

Demographics

● Nearly 1.7 million people are diagnosed with a TBI annually (CDC, 2014)
● That number jumps to 2.6 million people when considering TBI and ABI together (BIAA, 2014)
● 75% of TBI’s are considered mild, but nearly 5.3 million Americans live with a long-term disability as a result (BIAA, 2014)

Comprehensive Neurorehabilitation and Plasticity

● Comprehensive neurorehabilitation seeks to provide a systematic and holistic approach to providing a therapeutic milieu, psychotherapy, cognitive rehabilitation and interdisciplinary treatment.
  ■ vocational interventions
  ■ follow-up support

Benefits of Art Therapy

● Imagery
● Decreased defenses
● Objectification
● Permanence
● Spatial Matrix
● Creative and Physical Energy
● Self-esteem enhancement
  -(Wadeson, 2010)
● Emotional expression/regulation
● Developmental levels
● Trauma processing

Art and the Brain

● Art-making as…
  ○ a mind-body connection
  ○ a bilateral process
  ○ a bridge between implicit and explicit
  ○ a nonverbal process
  ○ a positive coping mechanism
  ○ a means to communicate & express oneself
  ○ a sublimating process

Clinical Considerations

● Consistency/repetition/exposure
● Therapeutic rapport
● Pre-sets
● Orientation & reorientation

● Basic Neurobiological/TBI Language
● Hierarchical organization
● Bilateral activation
● Plasticity
● Use-dependent reorganization

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