

Certificate in Integrative Palliative Care – 3
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Week-10
Lecture 75: Expressive Art Therapy

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EXPRESSIVE ART THERAPY

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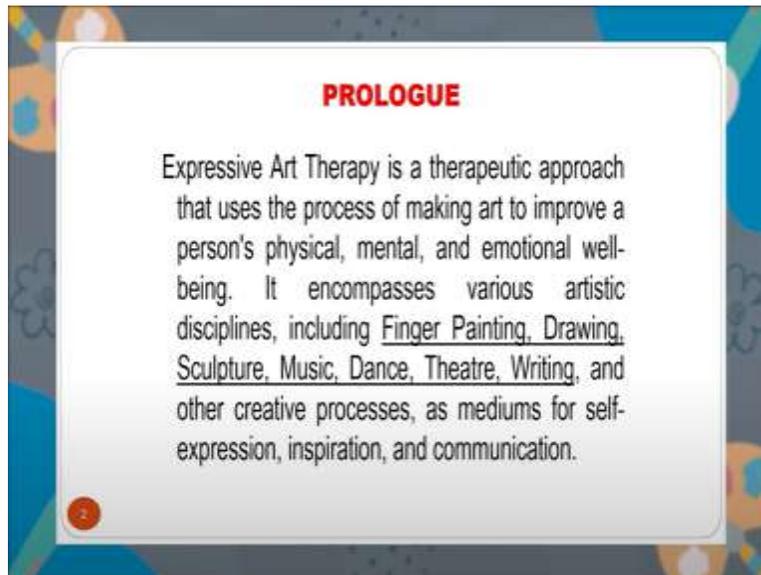
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Hello students, the topic of today's session is expressive art therapy.

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Expressive art therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses the process of making art to improve a person's physical, mental and emotional well-being. It encompasses various artistic disciplines including finger painting, drawing, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, writing and other creative processes as mediums for self-expression, inspiration and communication.

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We all know that the moment we get up in the morning and the moment we get go back to sleep, we perceive many information's from our environment. Our brain has a tendency or its main function to assign an emotion to that feeling or emotions. It depends on our

past experiences, our habits and our needs that whether we will be having a positive emotion or a negative emotion.

A simple smell or a song can induce a feeling of positivity or negativity depending on our mental state. When we encounter a negative emotion, either we just seek to find out the causes of that situation which has caused that emotion or we just try to fight with it. We say that we will not indulge in that negative emotion because it will spoil my day. But both of these approaches sometimes are not functional.

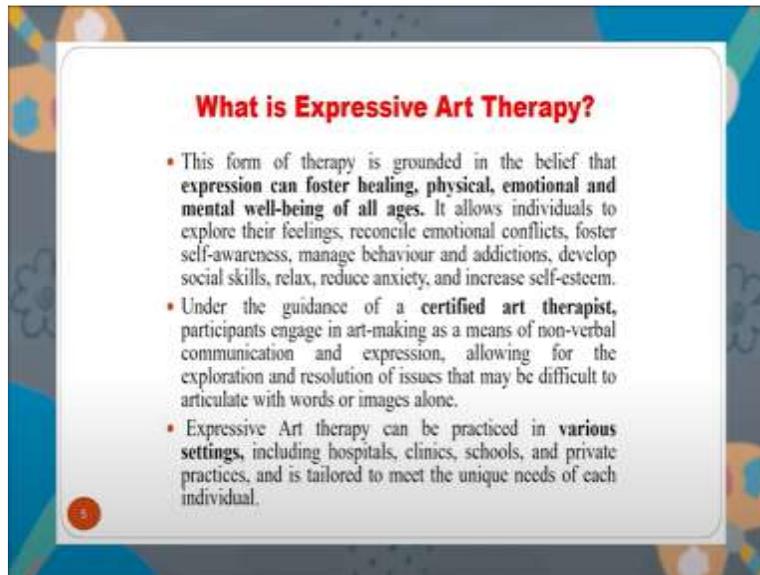
Because when we fight with emotion, it comes to our mind more and more and we become a victim of the negative spiral of stress and burnout. Burnout occurs when there are situations which we are not able to cope up. And there are physical changes in our body, heart rate is increased, our temperature is increased, our respiration rate is increased. So, all of these physiological changes bring a negative effect in our body, our sympathetic nervous system is aroused. What is needed? It is a need that we should try to distract our mind from the negative situation and express our emotions in a healthy way in a way that may give us certain satisfaction.

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The part one of this lecture is concerned with nature goals and types of expressive art therapy.

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This form of therapy is grounded in the belief that expression can foster healing physical, emotional and mental well-being of all ages. It allows individuals to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behaviour and addictions, develop social skills, relax, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem. It is not only the requirement to treat only the symptoms which are outward. We require that the negative emotions and their causes should be cured and we should be healed from the negativity of that emotion for which expressive therapy can help us.

Under the guidance of a certified art therapist, participants engage in art making as a means of non-verbal communication and expression, allowing for the exploration and resolution of issues that may be difficult to articulate with words or images alone. Expressive art therapy can be practiced in various settings including hospitals, clinics, schools and private practices and is tailored to meet the unique needs of each individual.

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There is a difference between expressive arts therapy and art therapy. While there is an overlap between these two, there is also a key difference. Expressive art therapy, which is concerned with a multi-modal approach, it has many dimensions, meaning it to incorporate not only visual art, but also the elements of drama therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, writing and so on.

It is also important to note that expressive art therapy is a relatively new field which is developed in the early 1970s and continues to evolve.

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There are certain goals of expressive art therapy. First one is to improve your coping skills. To develop and strengthen your coping mechanism for dealing with life challenges using art as a tool for the problem solving and exploring alternative perspective. It also enhances your communication skills.

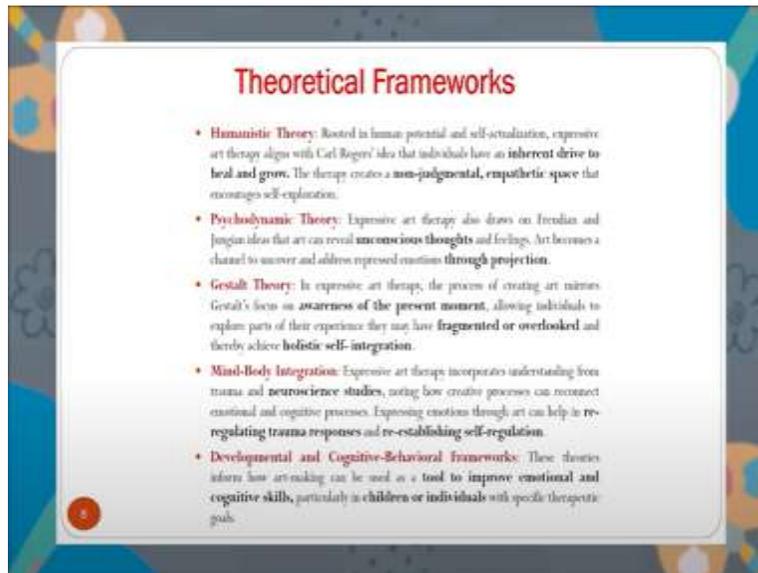
It facilitates not only your visual expression but also the non-verbal part of communication which is very important to convey your thoughts and feelings because communication has very important role to play in our life in not only in our personal life but also in our interpersonal lives. It also fosters social skills. When we practice art therapy in group settings, there is a possibility of social interaction and connecting with other people. So, it also helps to develop a sense of community and it reduces a feelings of isolation. It also helps in boosting your self-esteem and your confidence.

Self-esteem is very important for a happy and healthier life. When we value ourselves, we feel happy and we can do wonders and we can achieve our own goals. And expressive art therapy can help people to empower by validating their creative expressions and accomplishments, fostering a positive self-image and confidence. It also helps in healing and recovery. As I told you, that merely treating the outward symptoms sometimes is not workable.

The person should be healed from inside and expressive art therapy supports the healing process from psychological trauma, illness or injury by engaging the mind, body and spirit in the creative process. It also encourages play and experimentation. We all know that we enjoy play. Since childhood, we had been playing. So, it gives you opportunity to play with colours, to play with sand or to play with words and you can make your own experiment and learn in the process.

It creates a space for playfulness and experimentation where individuals can explore new forms of expression and creativity without any judgment.

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There is a theoretical framework which explains that why expressive art therapy is so effective. There are many theoretical foundations which explain the process. In humanistic paradigm, we believe the profounder of this humanistic paradigm are Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers idea was that everyone has certain potential. If we accept the person non-judgmentally and give him or her a chance to express his feelings, we can be empathetic to that person and it gives an opportunity to heal and grow. And in the psychodynamic theory, Sigmund Freud also emphasized that we have the unconscious brain and the conscious brain and subconscious also is very important for which the Freud has given importance.

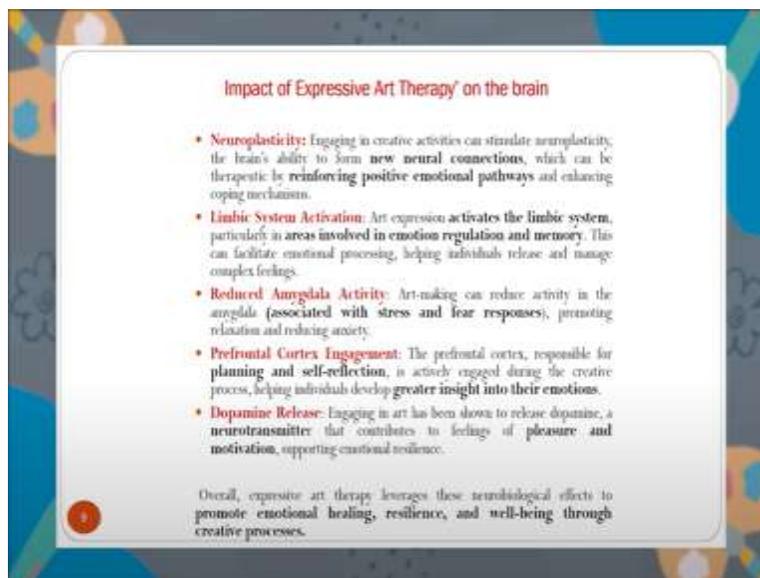
And he suggested certain techniques like free association and dream analysis to uncover the potential of the person to heal the person from inside from past trauma or negative feelings. So, he propounded that with the use of the defense of projection, when the person is given an opportunity to express certain unstructured material is provided to the person, the person sees what he or she wants to see. Jaise ham kaite hain na jiske man hota hai toh vahi perceive karte hain (Hindi phrase meaning as we often say, we perceive only what our mind is inclined towards) So, we perceive what is there in our own mind. So, with this process of expression, the person gets a feeling of healing and happiness. Gestalt theory also gives importance to the gestalt or the whole.

When the person is given freedom to work in the situation, the person can create his or her own gestalt in the present moment because gestaltist believe that if we are aware of our present moment, we try to make an integrated whole from the fragmented parts, from the overlooked part which we do not focus generally. So, when we just try to refocus and

when we try to create a different gestalt or holistic situation, then we automatically heal from that situation because it gives us an opportunity to get away from our own negativities. Mind-body integration is also a theoretical perspective which emphasizes whatever is there in our own mind, it impacts our body. The positive hormone or the negative hormones which are secreted in our body depends on the quality of our own thoughts. The neuroscientific studies emphasize that if we engage in creative processes we can reconnect with our emotions and our own resources which are there in our subconscious mind and if we express our emotion through art it can help in regulating our trauma responses and re-establishing self-regulation.

From the developmental and cognitive behavioral frameworks, these theories inform how art making can be used as a tool to improve emotional and cognitive skills, particularly in children or individuals with specific therapeutic goals.

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There is an impact of expressive art therapy on brain processes. Neuroplasticity highlights that engaging in creative activities can stimulate neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to form new neural connections which can be therapeutic by reinforcing positive emotional pathways and enhancing coping mechanism. Whenever we do certain things a neural pathway is created in the brain and sometimes we feel that we have developed certain unhealthy habits and in such situations we have to unlearn our past bad habits and relearn certain positive things and if we learn new things a new neural pathway is created and art therapy can help into forming new neural pathways and new habits. Our limbic system is also activated and art expression activates the limbic system particularly in areas which are involved in emotional regulation and memory.

This can facilitate emotional processing, helping individuals release and manage complex feelings. It can also reduce amygdala activity which is associated with stress and fear responses. When this activity is reduced, we feel less stress. It also engages our prefrontal cortex which is related with planning and self-reflection and is actively engaged during the creative process. It helps individuals develop greater insight into their emotions.

It helps to release the dopamine neurotransmitter which is connected with happiness and pleasure and motivation. Overall, expressive art therapy leverages these neurobiological effects to promote emotional healing, resilience and well-being through creative processes.

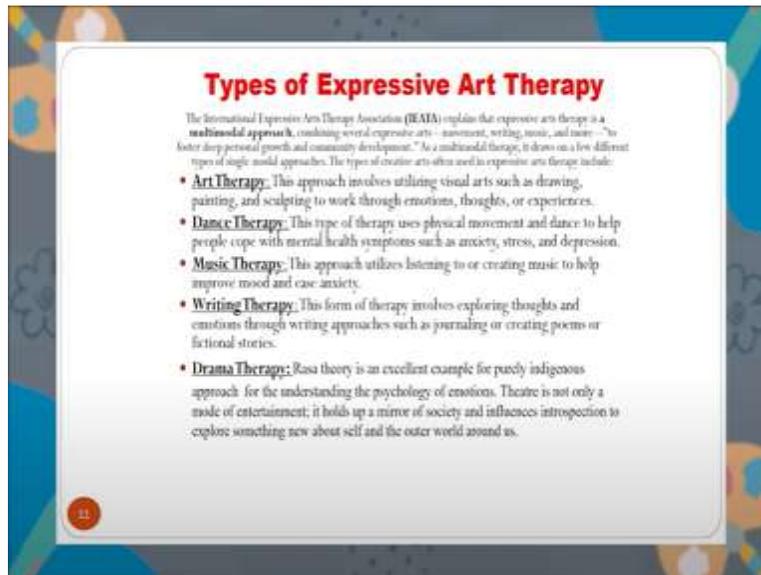
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These are the expressive art therapy which we can use. We all indulge in certain rituals depending on our religious background. We celebrate festivals and we have certain symbols in our culture.

We have language arts. We write poetry, journaling and read stories. We indulge in visual arts in which we can mention the collage and art clay making arts. Dramatic arts drama is also a part of expressive art therapy and movement and sound if we dance or give certain movements to our body we feel healed and there are symbolic words if we make a symbolic word we play with the material we can make our own words and express our own selves.

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So there are different types of expressive art therapy. As I told you that it is a multimodal approach and it has many dimensions.

The International Expressive Art Therapy Association explains that expressive art therapy is a multimodal approach and it combines several expressive arts, movements, writing, music and more to foster deep personal growth and community development. There are I will be discussing many techniques of art therapy like painting, sculpting in detail, dance therapy, music therapy will be covered in I hope other lectures, writing therapy I will also be discussing, drama therapy is also a very important technique for expression and in our indigenous framework we have a rasa theory. It is an excellent example for purely indigenous approach, Indian approach for understanding the psychology of emotions. The theatre and drama is not only a mode of entertainment, it holds up a mirror of the society and influences introspection to explore something new about your own self and the outer world around us.

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And second part is related with how to practice expressive art therapy.

Although all the techniques may not be suitable to all the people, they have to be tailored as per the needs, as per the interest of the person because it has to be of the interest of the person. It can foster self-exploration, emotional release and healing. One form can be the collage making, the person can use photos, various materials, piece of papers to express their feelings, dreams and challenges and this activity helps in exploring the articulating complex emotions and thoughts. I would like to mention that we have a certain primary emotion and certain complex emotions. The primary emotions are the emotions of happiness and sadness.

But the complex emotions, we have a complexity. For example, if we love someone, it is a combination of certain tenderness, pleasure, devotion and passion. We love somebody, but we want to possess. We want to sometimes become people, become aggressive in their own love.

It's a very complex emotion. Similarly, hate and grief are also very complex emotions. Sometimes we are not able to express, understand our own self about these emotions and express them.

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And these activities of art therapy like clay work can help us out. Because working with clay can be deeply therapeutic allowing individuals to express themselves and their complex emotions especially the children enjoys in playing with the clay.

We can paint the music. Music has a healing effect and if the person is allowed to paint the effect the music has on the person. it can also be amazing technique because it bridges the auditory and visual expression. Guided drawing is also a very important technique in which the person is asked to draw something and the several instructions can be given to the person to make a drawing. For example, draw your safe space, draw flowers or the coffee in a mug or a self-portrait you can draw. So there are many guidance prompts which can be given for a drawing.

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Mask making is also a technique which creates masks which can help clients to explore and express different aspects of their identity or emotions they might be hiding. This activity allows for a tangible exploration of self and the roles individuals play in their lives. Dance or movement therapy in which clients express themselves and explore emotions to movement. This can be particularly liberating for those who find verbal communication challenging. There are people who are not able to express their emotion in words.

So, with these techniques they can communicate their inner feelings and thoughts. Writing and storytelling. Writing stories, poems or journal entries allows clients to articulate their thoughts and feelings through words offering a path to understanding and healing. I will be discussing in detail about writing therapy in forthcoming sessions.

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There are certain other activities like photography.

Sometimes we feel like capturing a moment, a natural scene or a anything that interests us and express our emotion. Sculpting is also a technique. We make a figure or a idol from the material which is provided to express our internal experiences. It offers a new way to communicate and explore our personal narratives.

Mandala drawing is also a technique. It is a very ancient technique in which the person tries to cover up to make the representation of inner world and the outer world because all of us live in a ecosystem. There is a bigger ecosystem and the microcosm and the macrocosm. So whatever there are inner feelings we can draw in the mandala art. It is very useful technique.

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Peer Group Art

- Peer Group Art in therapy involves creating art in a group setting with others who share similar challenges or experiences.
- This collaborative approach encourages participants to express themselves, share insights, and offer support in a non-judgmental environment.
- It helps reduce feelings of isolation, builds a sense of community, and fosters emotional healing.
- Each participant contributes to both individual and collective artwork, enhancing empathy and understanding among group members and helping them process emotions in a shared, creative, and supportive space.



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A peer group art when we work with group it also gives an opportunity to socialize, to share our feelings with other people and to form a sense of community.

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Guided Drawing!



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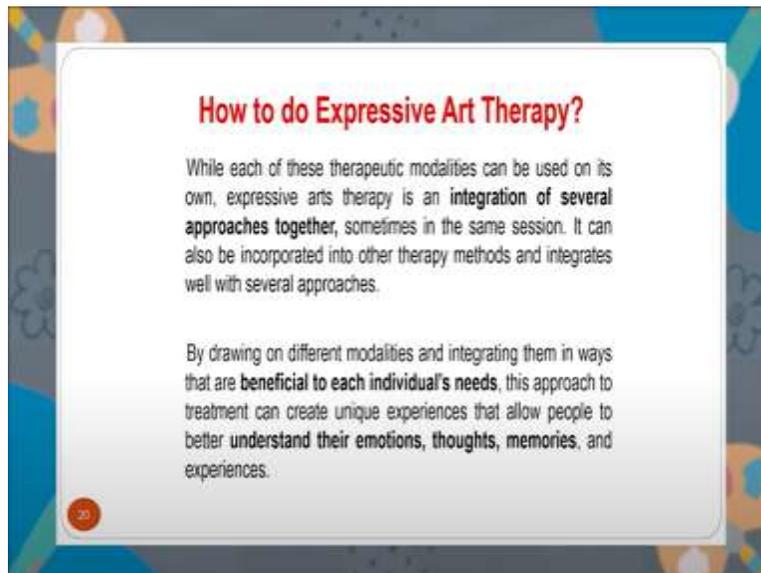
So guided drawing I have also mentioned that with this technique the art therapist gives certain instructions to draw things and it can also be unguided drawing.

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You can draw on your own interest and sometimes it can be a with guidance. Draw your safest place as a technique to explore the attachment style of the person. The person is asked to visualize a place which is very safe. The person first takes deep breath, relaxes and imagines a place which is very safe, how it smells, how it looks, how it you feel in that space. So you can draw your safe space.

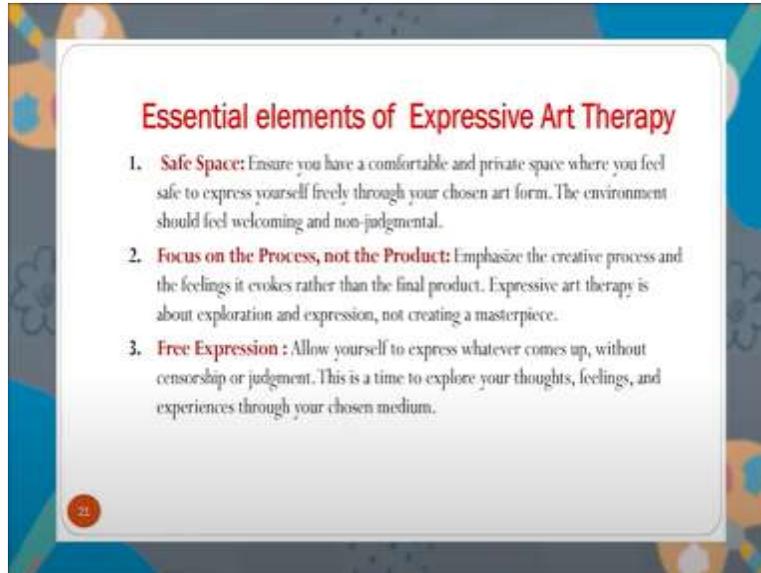
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How to do expressive art therapy because it is an integration of several approaches together. It is a multimodal approach as I said and integrating these things we can

develop an insight into our own inner world and it can be beneficial for each individuals in recognizing his or her own needs, thoughts, emotions and memories.

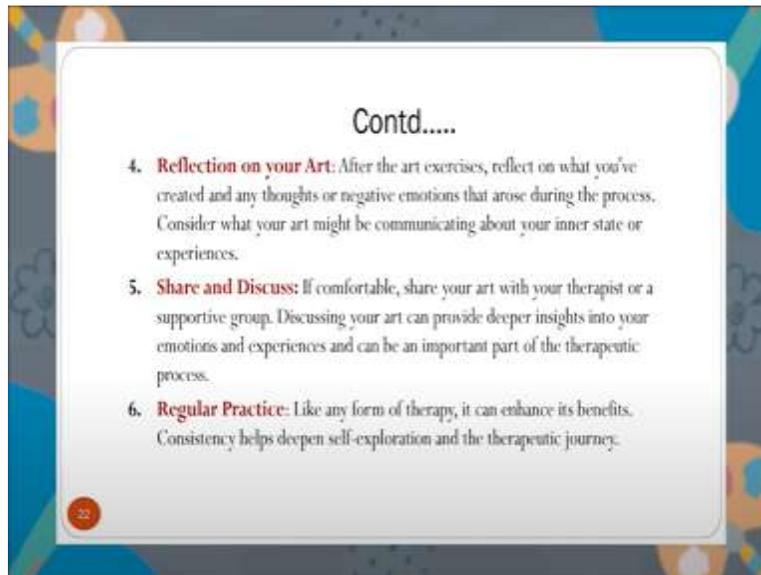
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There are certain essential elements of expressive art therapies like there should be a safe space, the person should feel comfortable and private space and it should be confident that then whatever he is writing or drawing will not be shared with other person and the focus should be not only the on the product but the process because few people may be hesitant or resistant in drawing something or making a creative expression. So we have to focus on the process, how the person feels before and after few sessions because as we mature, we become more and more expressive if the art therapy works for the person.

Free expression is also very important. The person should be allowed to express whatever comes into her mind without censorship or judgment. This is a time to explore your thoughts, feelings and experiences because you have a feeling that you will not be judged. Nobody will make comments on it.

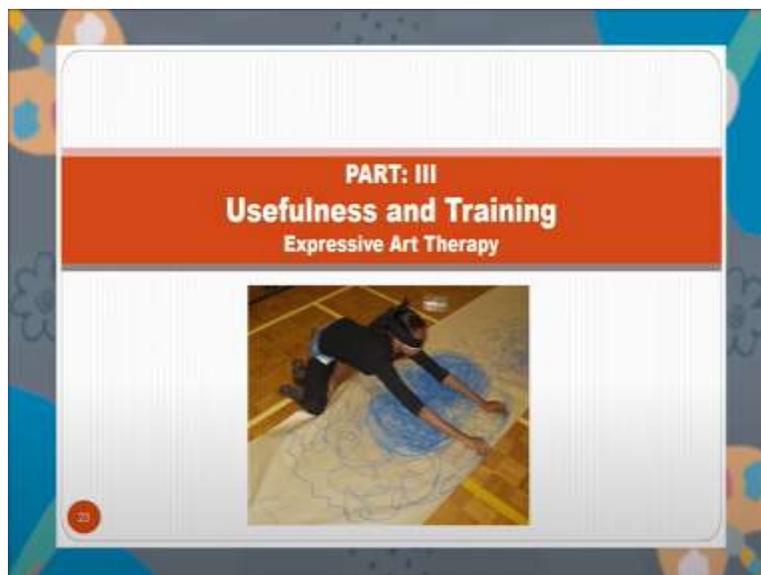
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And there should be a reflection on your art. Whatever is the product should be discussed with the art therapist because what you have drawn, it is there in your mind.

The therapist asked the person who has drawn to explain what it looks like. What is there? What you want to convey through this story or what do you want to convey with this drawing? So, sharing and discussing about the product is also very important. And of course, the regular practice.

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It is a like of therapy, you make a practice of your drawing or any expression and self exploration because it is a journey.

It is not a one time event. You should keep on doing practices. And the last part of this session is concerned with usefulness and training of expressive art therapy.

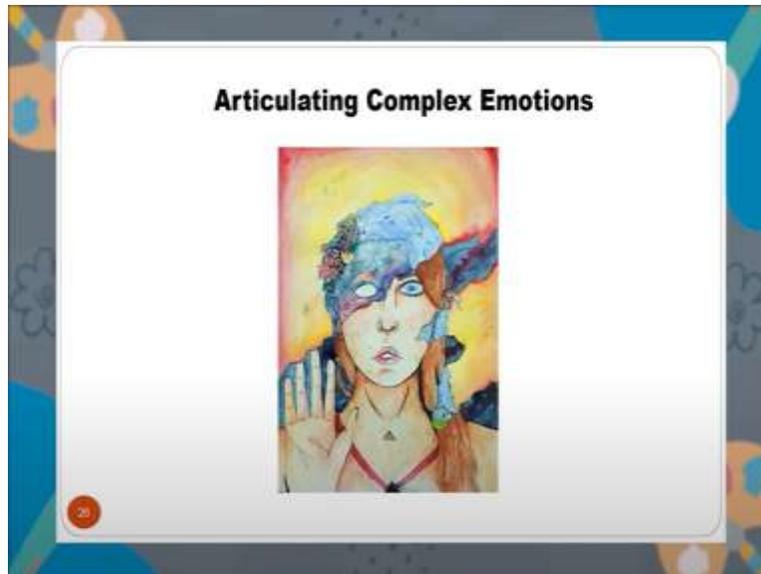
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Any person from any age can benefit from this expressive art therapy.

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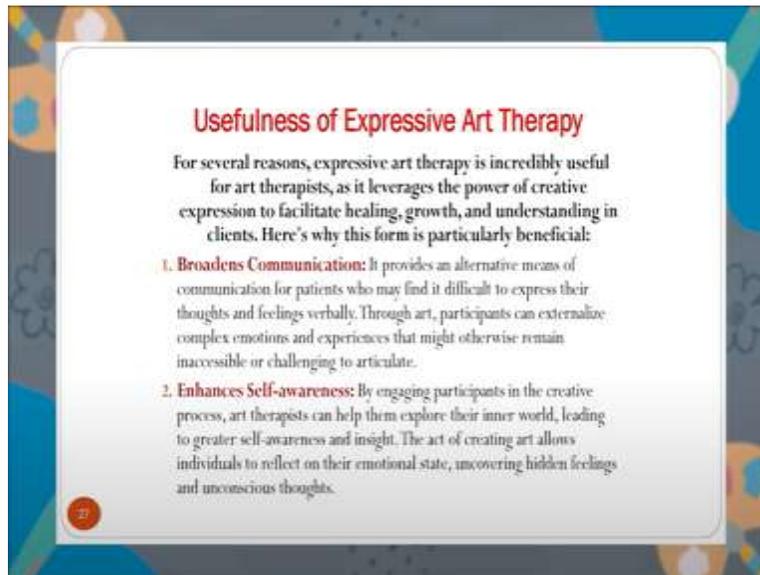


Old people, young people and the people who have certain neurotic symptoms or borderline personality symptoms, they are not able to understand their own complex emotions. As I told you that sometimes we have very human being are sometimes become very complex in their own emotion.

They are not able to understand whether they are feeling fear or whether they are feeling anger or whether they are feeling disgust. So it can help a person, when the person makes a product and the therapist discusses with the client that what do you want to convey with this figure. In this drawing we can say the picture has only one eye open. and the other eye is not visible. So it can have certain implications, certain relation with the person's own life.

So how the person perceives this picture, it is very important to understand.

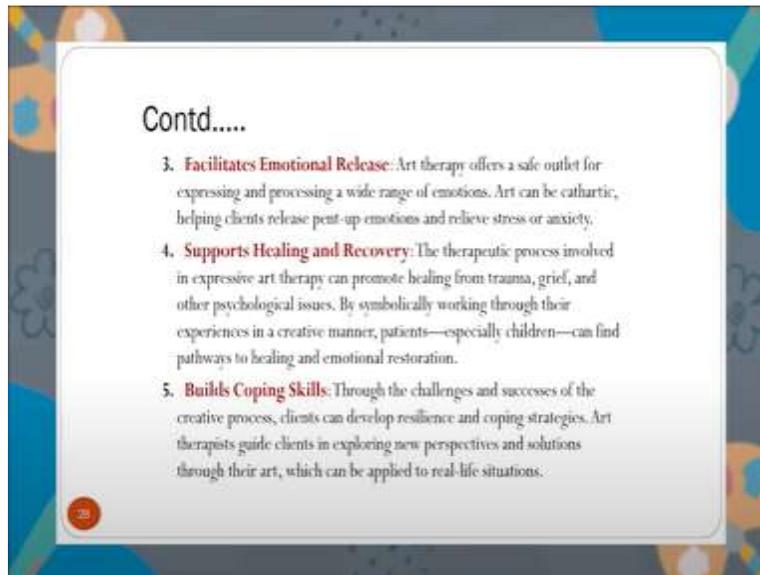
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So usefulness of expressive art therapy and for various reasons, expressive art therapy is incredibly useful for art therapist as it leverages the power of creative expression to facilitate healing growth and understanding because it broadens communication as i told you that in comparison to verbal communication the expression that you give it's very important. Your non-verbal communication is very important the moment the person draws anything or makes any product what is the body language what he verbalizes, what are the expression while making a drawing, it is very important because it can be useful for the counselor or the therapist to understand the inner world of the person. It can help to enhance self-awareness. Sometimes we are not able to understand our own emotion, but while making a product or drawing, we can self-explore what is there in my mind.

In this busy world, we don't have a time to think about our own thoughts, feelings and emotions. And if the therapist gives instructions that draw a safe space, draw a happy moment in your home or at school, then you think. What is the happy moment in my life? I have to understand and draw it, right?

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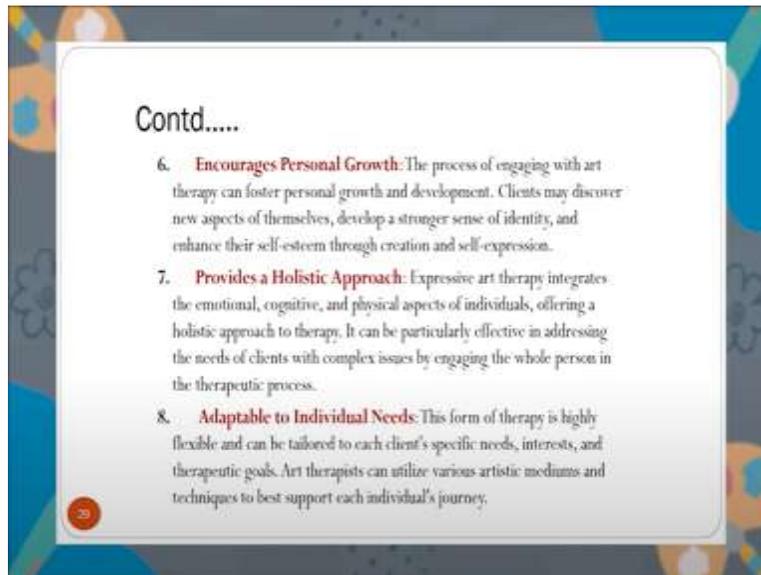


So now it also facilitates emotional release Sometimes we are not able to express our emotions because we are fearful to express them before others Because we understand ki what people will say. Log kya kahenge? (Hindi phrase meaning What will people say?) This is the symptoms we usually face ki (Hindi word meaning like) we just hesitate to express our own emotions.

So it helps in releasing our emotions. It supports healing and recovery. Suppose the person has undergone a trauma or a grief and other psychological issues. Not only the external symptoms are cured but the person is healed from the inside. By healing I mean that the person accepts the situation and tries to connect with the present moment to present the situation and go on to move on. Because life never ends whatever trauma and grief we face in our life.

Whatever challenges we face in our life we learn something and we should move on in our own lives. So this therapy can help us out it builds our own coping skills sometimes people are very emotional and they are not able to understand what should be done in the present situation because for being happy in our life we have to have a good problem solving skill, decision making skills and while making a writing product or a sculpture or a sand product we connect with our own self and develop those coping strategies which can help us to bounce back from the situations and be in the line. So we have to be resilient and for resilience expression of our complex emotions is very much important.

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It encourages personal growth.

As I told you that life is a journey. We are here to grow up. We are not here to stuck up in any situation and it helps to understand our own sense of identity. It enhances our self-esteem and we make creative expression and to move on in our own life. So it is very holistic approach. If we treat only one part of our body and keep the other parts unattended will not be healed. If we are treated holistically, all of us are the combination of physical component, emotional component, cognitive component.

So, we have to take care of all these components and expressive art therapy gives us an opportunity to express all the layers of our existence, all the parts of our existence are attended to. It is very adaptable to individual needs. It is not the restrictive approach we just do not say that do this and the you will get the result depending on the condition of the person, needs of the person, situations, the person's past habits and experiences, it can be tailored with the need of the person.

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Emotional Expression for Cancer Patients

- Emotional expression is highly valuable for cancer patients as it helps them process and cope with the psychological burden of their diagnosis and treatment.
- By expressing emotion, whether through talking, writing, or art, patients can relieve stress, reduce anxiety, and prevent emotional suppression, which can otherwise lead to increased distress or depressive symptoms.
- Emotional expression also fosters resilience, improves relationships by enhancing communication, and often contributes to an overall sense of empowerment and control, promoting a better quality of life during treatment.



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It can be helpful for the chronic disease patients as well. There are many researchers which reveal that if we give this therapy to the cancer patients, they are better able to cope up with their trauma of possessing a cancer and they are more adherent to their treatment and for personal growth journey.

They take it as a challenge and how to cope with them. It is very helpful.

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STAR BURST ART

- Starburst Art is a creative technique that often involves radiating lines, colors, or patterns from a central point, resembling the effect of an explosion or burst of light.
- In art therapy, it can be used to symbolize energy, movement, or a focal point of emotions.
- Patients, including those in cancer therapy, may find it beneficial for expressing feelings of strength, hope, or transition.
- The visual impact of the "burst" can also serve as a therapeutic release or a representation of personal breakthroughs or resilience.



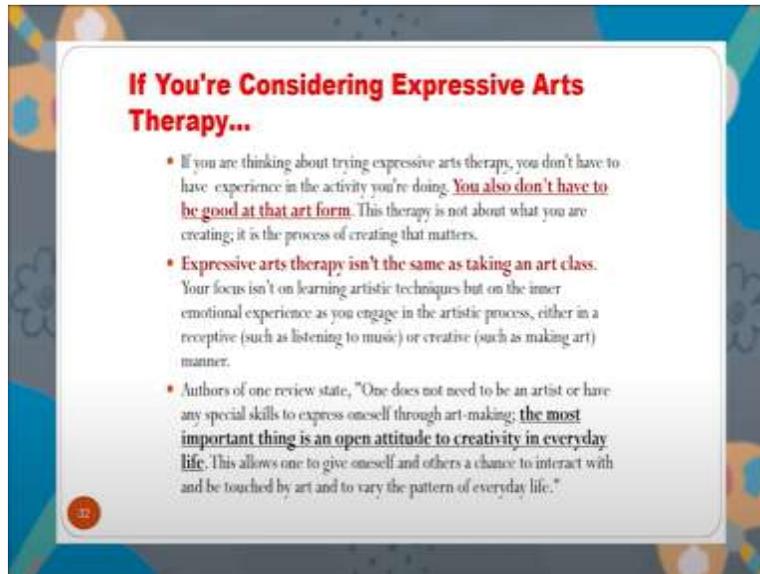
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There are many, many researchers. Star burst art has been very helpful for the cancer patients because sometimes the patient who has a breast cancer surgery, they have to

develop their own new identity. If the person is given this opportunity of a star burst, it starts from a point and expand to the outer circle. As I told you in mandala art, we just move from outer circle to inner circle.

But in this star burst art, we just move from the microcosm to macrocosm. It is also very helpful.

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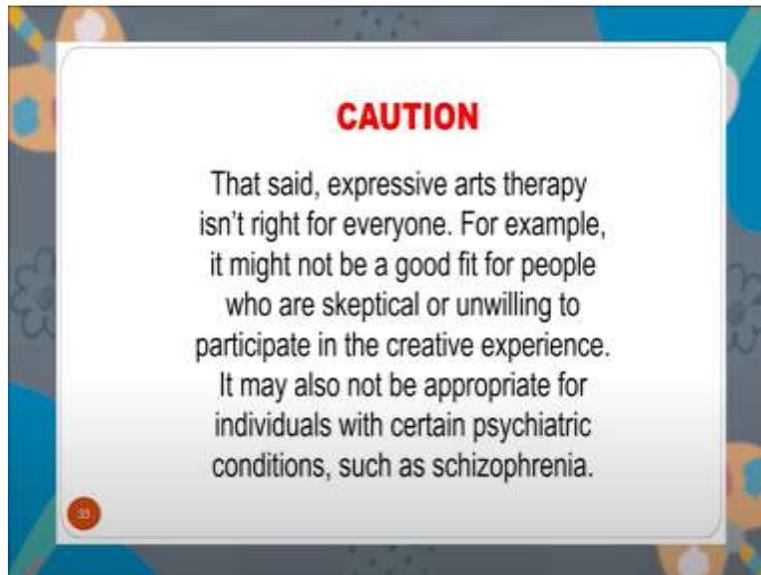


If You're Considering Expressive Arts Therapy...

- If you are thinking about trying expressive arts therapy, you don't have to have experience in the activity you're doing. You also don't have to be good at that art form. This therapy is not about what you are creating; it is the process of creating that matters.
- **Expressive arts therapy isn't the same as taking an art class.** Your focus isn't on learning artistic techniques but on the inner emotional experience as you engage in the artistic process, either in a receptive (such as listening to music) or creative (such as making art) manner.
- Authors of one review state, "One does not need to be an artist or have any special skills to express oneself through art-making; the most important thing is an open attitude to creativity in everyday life. This allows one to give oneself and others a chance to interact with and be touched by art and to vary the pattern of everyday life."

And if you are considering to become expressive art therapist, it is not necessary that you should be very good at art and because expressive art therapy is not the same as taking art class it is giving an opportunity to the person to come up it's not that that you have to teach what is right what is wrong. The most important thing is an open attitude to creativity in everyday life You have to be creative in your own mind only then you will allow the persons to do anything in your art expressions, right.

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There are certain caution that we have to take care that said expressive art therapy is not the right for everyone.

For example it might not be a good fit for a people who are skeptical or unwilling to participate in the creative experience sometimes the people might think that i am not good at i will not be able to And they are fearful that what we draw the people may understand how bad the person has done. If you are not willing or you are very skeptical, it is not good for you. It may also not be appropriate for individuals with certain psychiatric conditions like schizophrenia. Because the schizophrenics are usually remain in their own world.

They do not want to socialize. They do not want to come up. So it is not good for them. Thank you very much for patient listening.