Complementary and alternative clinical Practices

Clinicians have embraced two therapies that are both creative and effective as clinical therapeutic interventions. A working definition of creativity is that it produces something that is original, worthwhile, and the “something” can take many forms (Sternberg, 2006). For example, as Sternberg points out, people have ideas that are applied along with their reasoning skills to find solutions for those ideas. One form of creativity applied to therapeutic interventions is in the use of complementary and alternative medical practices, or CAMs. CAM is explained as “non-mainstream treatments that are either used in addition to, or with conventional treatments (National Center for Complementary and Alternative medicine, 2013 as cited in Aletaris, Paino & Bride, 2014).

Two creative therapies practiced as CAMs are Music and Art therapies. Music therapy is an established profession governed by The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) as the organization that oversees professional music therapists (www.musictherapy.org.) This therapeutic intervention is noted as an evidenced-based method (clinically tried and effective) to teach clients how to express themselves better, and achieve more effective communication. For instance, musical techniques can be used to address physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of clients with the use of musical techniques. In addition, based on research the intervention can be effective in many areas of a client’s life including: overall physical rehabilitation and movement, and helping him or her to become involved in their own treatment ([www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org)).

Based on the AMTA’s website ([www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org)., AMTA’s mission is to “advance public awareness of the benefits of music therapy and increase access to quality music services”. Several rehabilitative conditions are listed in which music therapy can be applied including: (a) brain injury, (b) dementia) (c) pain reduction (d) abnormal sleep patterns, and (e) motor function improvement. According to Gracke, Block, & Castle (2008), Music therapy provides the client with a sense of empowerment. For example, songs are a good form of expression, and can help to explain a lot about a person such as their life stories. For instance, as they note songs “express our hopes, and disappointments” p.444). CAM therapies can also help clients to develop relationships. As clients are empowered to communicate more effectively, their interaction with others will improve. Along these lines, according to Gracke et al., Music therapy has two objectives: (1) pursue a common goal focused on music, and (2) create conditions that will motivate patients to engage in musical activities that aids in own treatment.

Another CAM approach is Art therapy. Professionals of Art therapy are governed by the America Art Therapy Association (AATA, arttherapy.org). Art therapy is often used as a method for treating emotional problems. The intervention may consist of painting, sculpting, drawing dancing, and other forms of art. Based on evidenced-based research, the therapy has been shown to foster self-awareness, and can also be used to encourage the individual to be more expressive. The role of Art therapists is to aid clients in identifying specific issues and deal with emotions they are unaware of that can lead to problems. For instance, according to Aletaris et al., 2014), Art therapy has provided evidence as an effective treatment for substance abusers. Along with conventional treatments, as an additional treatment, CAM teaches the substance abuser to take responsibility for his or her own actions instead of providing other reasons for the addiction. Aletaris et al found that the inclusion of CAM practices utilizing art and music therapies had positive results in addressing unique and specific needs of substance abuse patients. Thus, as they noted, both art and music therapy can be used to complement other psychosocial methods to aid clients, who have deep-seated emotions, which allows the client to confront these emotions in an expressive and creative way as they move toward healing.

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