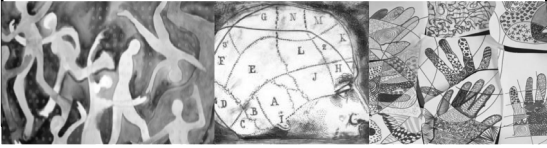


Mindfulness-Based Expressive Arts and Play Therapy | Master Class
Helping Traumatized Children Enhance Self-Regulation and Resilience

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Objectives for Today...

The importance of the following practices in mindfulness-based expressive arts, and play therapy work with children and young people and their families:

- Understanding How to Apply the Expressive Arts to Mindfulness-Based Practices;
- How Expressive Arts and Mindfulness Support Self-Regulation, Particularly Through Grounding Approaches;
- Key Examples of Evidence-Based Mindfulness Programs for Children and Teens;
- The Importance of Empathy to Our Work as Therapists and Advocates for Children;
- Several Hands-On Expressive Arts and Playful Experiences to Apply to Your Work with Children and Youth Challenged by Traumatic Stress.

First...Expressive Arts Therapies: A Brief Overview [and Review]




Expressive Arts Therapy: The Integrated Approach of Two or More Creative Arts Therapies...

- **Art Therapy**—purposeful use of visual arts (drawing, painting, and other media).
- **Music Therapy**— purposeful use of music to effect positive changes.
- **Dance/Movement Therapy**— psychotherapeutic use of movement.
- **Drama Therapy**— facilitating change through storytelling, play, improvisation and performance.
- And various forms of **creative writing, poetry, storytelling and play/imagination.**



Expressive Arts Therapy and the Concept of “Intermodal Transfer”




Paolo Knill, an Expressive Arts Therapy Founder

- Means “**shifting from one art form to another**”
- “Shifting” into another art form [movement, sound, writing, dramatic enactment, role play, imaginative play, image]
- And similar to play therapy where a play therapist helps children “shift” from one type of play activity to another.

Mindfulness Definitions...and There Are Many


- **It is a state of active, open attention on the present [observe without judgment].**
- **Mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to your current experience**, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future.
- **Mindfulness with children** often means **helping them develop awareness of feelings [including in their bodies] and how to focus on the present moment [especially when trauma or distress is present].**

"Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. It's about knowing what is on your mind." Jon Kabat-Zinn



Linehan's Key Point...

- Especially in cases of trauma, rhythmic breathing alone may not be advisable.
- We need to use an activity to help individuals focus away from body's sensations, while helping them to self-regulate with mindfulness-based experiences.



Why Mindfulness...



Cathy's hobby when traveling through airports: Taking photos of people on their cellphones [mindlessness-based activity].

Why Mindfulness & Expressive Arts?



Why Expressive Arts Therapy Supports Mindfulness-Based Interventions with Children and Adolescents

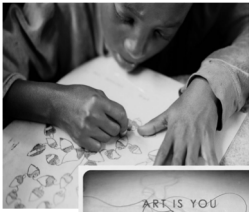

Many reasons, but there are 5 Key Areas:

1. **Non-Verbal** [implicit/embodied expression & "felt-sense"]
2. **Affective/Self-Regulation** ["feel better"/reduce stress]
3. **Lower-to-Higher Brain**
4. **Action-Oriented** [self-efficacy and mastery]
5. **Right-Mind-to-Right-Mind** [connection/positive attachment; "prosocial"]



#1: Non-Verbal Communication

- Although expressive arts therapies involve talk, their primary mode is activity, which is **mostly non-verbal and captures our "felt-sense" of experiences.**
- Similar to the state of mindfulness that is also an observation of our felt sense of the here-and-now.




Expressive Arts Therapies capitalize on...

Attunement between individuals through sensory experiences and social interaction— **right-mind-to-right-mind** experiences that involve **positive attachment** [right-brain dominant] and **empathy** [right-brain dominant]

Expressive Arts Help Us to Focus, Find the Felt Sense, & Flow = Mindfulness-Based Experiences

- **Focus** on the here-and-now while engaged in the process of expression or creation;
- **Find the Felt Sense** of how we feel in the here-and-now;
- **Flow** or the timeless sensation experienced in the process of satisfying expression or creation.



Extremely High


The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may:

- talk to himself,
- play with sounds,
- hum, sing.

The child appears relaxed. The child expresses self-confidence and self-assurance.


Illustration: "When a Child is in the Extremely High State of Flow"

Children Explain How Mindfulness Works...



"Window of Tolerance"

Finding just the right amount of expressive arts that can be tolerated is key to mindfulness-based practice.



Window of Tolerance

Hyperarousal Zone

Window of Tolerance
Optimal Arousal Zone

Hypoarousal Zone


2. Symptomatic "Tight or Right" Response
Increased sensation, flooded
Emotional reactivity, hypervigilance
Invasive imagery, flashback
Disorganized cognitive processing

1. Normal Range "Social Engagement" Response
State where emotions can be tolerated and information integrated

3. Basal/Typical "Immobilization" Response
Relative absence of sensation
Numbing of emotions
Disabled cognitive processing
Reduced physical movement

Adapted from Ogden, Minnen, & Foa, 2006, p. 27; De Courgen, Fisher, & Runtz, 2010, p. 2

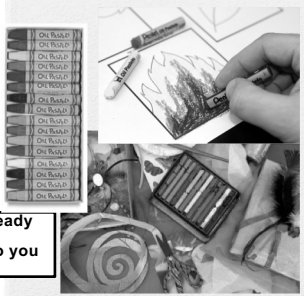
One example of Windows of Tolerance Theory within Trauma-Informed Practice



Importance of Self-Regulation and Attunement: A Mindfulness-Based Expressive Arts Experience


An Essential Foundation All Therapeutic Work and Relationships

Are You Ready for an Expressive Therapies experience to attune, focus and flow in the here-and-now?



...get your drawing materials ready [oil pastels]. And cut out your squares with circles in them, so you will be ready!

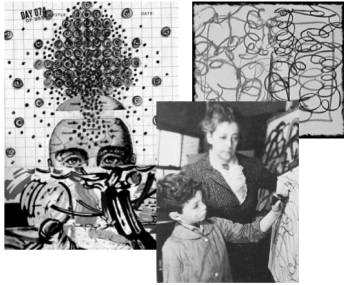
Art Therapy Research: Art making [drawing, doodling] increases language and memory, decreases stress



- When the hands are engaged in creative activity, **people tend to verbalize 2 to 3 times as much** [various studies] than just talking alone.
- Also **more memory is accessed** [various studies].
- 15 minutes of drawing or doodling = **measurable cortisol reduction**

Role and importance of Bilateral drawing and movement

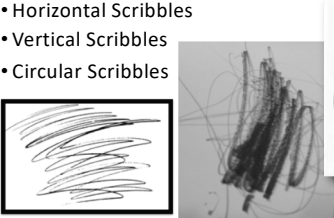
Bilateral movement and crossing the midline is found in many traditions and in recent approaches



- Sensory interventions [occupational therapy]
- Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing [EMDR]
- Somatic Approaches to treatment

Three Movements... The First Three Movements in Children's Drawing Development

- Horizontal Scribbles
- Vertical Scribbles
- Circular Scribbles



Q & A and Time for a Break!



Let's Work on Grounding and Anchoring...





Grounding, Anchoring and Expressive Arts

Grounding is an experience that halts the cascade of hyperactivation or for some, **hypoactivation and induces a sense of peace and/or safety**

Anchoring is the sensory-based experience, image, practice or object that reconnects us to a sense of peace and/or safety in the here-and-now

What we say to individuals can make a difference--"Peace" versus "Safe Place"





The Four B's "The Four B's" are fairly common techniques that I learned from occupational therapists who work with sensory integration issues. They are systematic calming methods that can be used with children and adults to help them self-regulate and regain a sense of self-control.

Breathe: When an individual feels out of control, anxious, fearful or even terrified, it is important to learn ways to get the brakes on. Putting the brakes on decreases excess energy and helps release muscle tension. To accomplish this, have the child or adult sit and press the palms of the hands together for 5 to 10 seconds, have them repeat this several times to really engage the muscles in the arms and shoulders.

Brace: Controlled breathing helps the person to regain a sense of body awareness and restore a sense of calm. It also helps to stabilize and ground the body. Have the child or adult lean to a side with hands on the belly/abdomen and breathe deeply into the belly/abdomen. One pointer that really helps in the 5-Star Breathing Chart [see next page], it helps to orient the individual to breathing in and out by simply following the sides of a 5-point star.

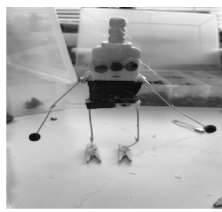

Brace: To create a sense of both alertness and calm, have the child or individual put their hands on top of their head and press with a light pressure. This not only calms the body, but also activates the brain, it is particularly useful for individuals who dissociate or "space out" during a session by gently bringing them back into the here and now.

Slow Down: Self-regulation and a sense of calm are closely related. Have the child or adult cross their arms in front of the body and apply pressure on the arms and shoulders not only increases body awareness, it also increases a sense of security, calm and focus (effective for both hyperarousal and dissociation), include a soft toy as part of the hug experience.

These are activities that once learned, can be used by individuals anytime they feel the need for calm, control and tension release.


...More Grounding | Body Regulation Strategies: The Four B's [sensory integration/occupational therapy principles.

Some Grounding Objects [altered dominos] by Children...

Grounding Recommendations...

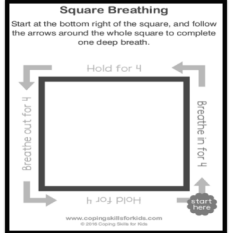
- What's my reminder [color, imaginary place, sensory experience] or cue word?
- What's my mindful practice [slowing down through the senses— 5 things I see, 4 things I hear, 3 things I can touch, etc]
- Holding the object or using another additional method— weighted blanket or toy



More Grounding | Various Breathing Techniques [because one size does not fit all]

Several Approaches:

- **Square Breathing** [used in medical settings]
- **Triangle Breathing** [in your handout]
- **Lazy 8 Breathing**
- **Five-Point Star Breathing** [next slide]



Star Breathing after Hurricane in Puerto Rico




Disaster Relief, post-hurricane in Puerto Rico in 2018

- Created Stars of "Hope"
- Therapists practiced self-regulatory Star Breathing with children, youth and adults
- Star Image = Not only Resilience, but also mindful Self-Regulation
- Anchoring Object

Art Therapist Stephanie Wray in Puerto Rico


Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy Study— Evidence for Expressive Arts

- **US National Institutes of Health [NIH] repeat-funding [amazing!]**
- **8 Week/Group intervention with series of structured art-based experiences combined with mindfulness practices [meditation and yoga]**
- **Cancer patients, but components could be adapted to trauma intervention**




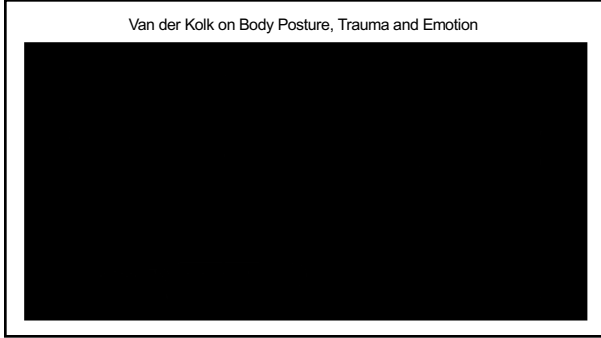
An Example from the MBAT Protocol...Mindful Exploration of Art Materials

- "We will be experiencing 4 different art materials in a playful way."
- "We will only take a few minutes to complete each picture- and you can "scribble" it if you want to!"
- "As we do each activity, take some time to notice how your body responds to each material."
- "We will write 3 to 5 words to describe the experience of the materials."


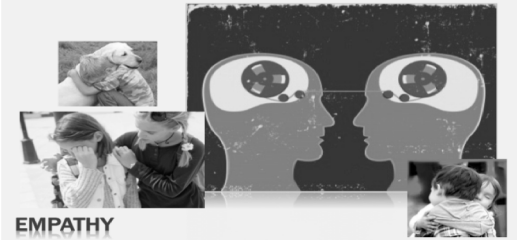


Let's Try One of These Mindful Exploration of Feelings through Expressive Arts

- Find your "feelings vocabulary" sheets
- Drawing materials of your choice and 2 sheets of white paper

Empathy: Mindfulness Manifested





EMPATHY
...the capacity for understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.

Empathy is a central healing factor for children, adults, families and communities.

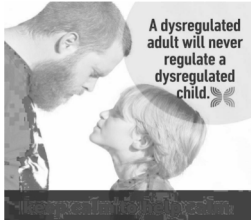



EMPATHY
...the capacity for understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.



Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) (Dan Siegel, Allan Schore)... the importance of community, connection and relationship in healing; IPNB underscores the role of "mindsight" in empathy.

Developing Empathy in Children: "Neurons that Fire Together, Wire Together"

Shatz, C. (1992). The Developing Brain. Scientific American, Vol. 267, No. 3.

Review: Expressive Arts as Right-Mind-To-Right-Mind & Relational/Pro-social Interventions

Mirroring and Attunement are key practices in Expressive Arts Therapy



The Expressive Arts are embodied, implicit experiences that have the potential to build "right-mind-to-right-mind" and pro-social connections between individuals.



When We Engage in Expressive Arts Together We Experience "Right-Mind-to-Right-Mind" – in other words, the right sides of our brains "connect" with each other



So...Let's Have a "Conversation!"

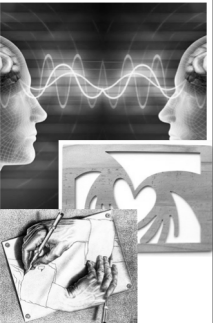
We are going to experience "Right-Mind-to-Right-Mind" and Sensory-Based Attunement through Art Expression...Get a Partner!



With Your Partner... Use 1 sheet of paper for the two of you. Using Drawing Materials [provided or use your own pens/oil pastels], have a "drawing" conversation on paper without talking!


One person begins and the other responds... going back and forth. Feel free to draw abstract shapes and/or use different lines, colors or images (we will do this activity for about 10 minutes).

Non-verbal— no talking!
Don't worry about whether you really understand each other! Just draw!



Now...find a way to non-verbally end your "conversation on paper."

Use your non-verbal communication Skills!



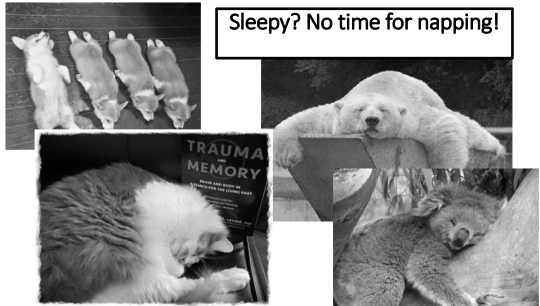
NEXT STEPS..

- Write Down 3 to 5 words or short phrases about your experience;
- After you and your partner have finished writing, take a few minutes to share your experiences...




Time for Sharing our experiences...

Sleepy? No time for napping!




Are You Ready for an Expressive Art Therapy-Yoga Activity?




Review: Grounding as an Embodied Experience

Grounding: An experience that halts the cascade of hyperactivation or for some, hypoactivation.


- Weighted blanket, therapy pillow
- Trauma-sensitive yoga poses
- Using a particular sense [gustatory = strong ginger candy]
- And what about the ubiquitous adult coloring book?



Where are your feet?




Yoga: Focusing on our Foundation!



Tadasana= "Mountain Pose"

Let's "see" what grounding feels like...

1. Choose a color of cardstock (12" x12" or large enough for foot to fit)
2. Trace your foot (with or without shoe or sock) [and you can place it anywhere on the page]




You've Got Mail



We are going to display our "Grounded Foot" images, look at each other's images and we are going to give each other some written "mail."

Odds and Ends...time for questions and some final experiences



With our most challenged and traumatized children, the power of mindfulness-based methods is strengthened by *co-regulation through helping relationships.*



Thank You!