

Painting Therapy: Into the Mind of Adolescence

Xuanya Ding

Academy of Arts, PhD student, Communication University of China, Beijing, China

*Department of Digital Arts, Lecturer, Xi'an University of Posts and Telecommunications, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China
175247548@qq.com*

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is an important period of physical development and personality formation, as well as a period of serious inner conflict. Art therapy is a kind of widely used in recent years, in mental health counseling and treatment technology, as one of the paintings intervention and expression way, because of its unique visual and easy operability, painting become young people's favorite art form of expression. Now in school and family education Painting Therapy plays an important role, at the same time, the intervention division of professional training is also very necessary.

Keywords: painting, psychological, Art therapy, adolescence

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological art therapy, through the use of painting, music, dance, drama and other art forms, to help people achieve the growth of the soul, is a kind of widely used in recent years, mental health counseling and treatment technology, especially the painting intervention, expresses the intuitive and visual information, and easy to operate, it has become one of the favorite form of art to express in the most teenagers. It plays an active role in campus psychological education and family education.

Adolescence is an important period of physical development and personality formation, as well as a period of serious inner conflict. Personality is a relatively stable component of the sum of psychological characteristics,^[1] However, due to the growth and development of adolescence as a result of the constant changes in physiology, coupled with exams, admission, interpersonal relationships, and even love, the formation of stable personality for teenagers bring challenges. According to Erickson's theory of personality development, adolescents face the conflict of self-identity and role confusion, as well as the rise of impulsive instincts.^[2] Helping them to build self-confidence, an inner sense of identity and self-continuity is positive significance to their development.

2. PAINTING THERAPY AND SPECIAL ADOLESCENCE

Painting is a special medium in psychotherapy. It is different from the traditional form of psychological therapy, and communicates with "non-language", so that people who are difficult to speak can open their hearts and reveal themselves by using pictures. It is especially suitable for teenagers who are full of "rebellious mood". It has two perspectives: one is to explore the mental state of the painter in the work from the perspective of psychoanalysis, and achieve the integration of personality through the use of free association. The second is to emphasize the creative power of painting itself, in other words, painting is therapy. In the process of creation, emotions can be released and restored, and finally in self-repair and renewal, new cognition and growth are formed.^[3] Therapists and tutors often integrate the above two perspectives in the specific operation, in order to give full play to the therapeutic effect and resolve inner conflicts for teenagers, and accompany them through the "turbulent, contradictory, turbulent and stormy period".

It is necessary to go into the inner world of teenagers and understand their emotional characteristics. First, it takes a long time. The improvement of emotional control ability in adolescents leads to prolonged emotional experience, and some bad mood will even accompany for a long time, affecting the growth of adolescents; Second, rich multiple. This period is full of imagination, all kinds of emotions that people may

experience can be reflected in teenagers, different levels, intensity, and even accompanied by emotional polarization; Third, individual differences. In adolescence, self-consciousness develops rapidly, and there may be obvious individual differences in emotional expression due to different personality and feelings. Fourth, duplicity. With the improvement of socialization level and gradual psychological maturity, adolescents can "disguise" their emotions, so that the external state is different from the actual inner experience.

Piaget believed that adolescents had obvious age characteristics in emotional experience and emotional expression. Promoting the development of cognition and the improvement of consciousness level will produce a positive emotional state. Painting can help teenagers to know themselves and promote their self-cognition and self-coordination. At the same time, the form of painting is conducive to teenagers loose self-defense, resolve impedance.

Impedance is often accompanied by a psychological state in adolescent counseling and psychological education, and is also an important factor affecting psychological therapy. The term was coined by Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, refers to the anxiety and depression of the client for the emerging memories in the process of free association. Its significance is to enhance the individual's self-defense; Later, Rogers, a representative of the humanistic school, said that impedance is the individual's resistance to self-exposure and emotional experience, and the individual's self-protection to prevent the threat to cognition and self-esteem. Behaviorism holds that impedance is the disapproval of the target behavior or the dependence on the original behavior pattern. ^[4]The expression of the three schools is slightly different, but all agree that impedance is a negative psychological defense mechanism in psychological counseling and treatment. For adolescents, it's more affected by multiple complex factors, constant changes in growth and development, Wrong cognition, will, emotion and so on will cause their appearance of alienation and indifference.

In the psychological counseling of teenagers, teenagers as their main body, cannot be ignored. Psychotherapy is an external push, but what really works is the internal cause. That is to say, the barriers that adolescents have, and the analysis and study of the "externalization" process such as self-defense, will play a positive role in breaking through their real problems. There are generally four types of adolescent impedance:

One is the way of speech, mostly for silence and redundant language, performance for either don't say or say can't stop; The second is the content of the speech, often asked not answered, asked east but answered west;

Three is the way of response, showing the appearance of forgetting or obedience, that is, ask what questions are answered "Don't know" "it's OK" and other vague words; Finally, the resistance of the relationship between adolescents and therapists and psychological counselors,

That is, because the former does not identify with each others relationship, deliberately destroy counseling Settings or time arrangements. Multi-dimensional and in-depth understanding of the inner world of teenagers, it is beneficial to the timely identification of the above impedance forms.

Drawing is a tool to help therapists, psychological counselors, parents and others understand teenagers clearly. Adolescents' participation in painting therapy has the following characteristics: First, whether on campus or at home, it can promote the harmonious relationship between therapists, tutors and therapy objects, increase participants' trust and pleasant feelings, and is a skill to break the relationship deadlock; Second, it is a probe to discuss how adolescents interact with school, family, partners, or other important relationships during their development; Thirdly, painting therapy often has structural or semi-structural themes, from which the needs of teenagers can be explored and targeted for their education and guidance; Fourth, the operation is often combined with conversation technology for psychological counseling. In painting and communication drive the change of teenagers, improve their spiritual quality, so as to achieve better counseling effect.

Therapy is an inner dialogue. Whether it is individual or group counseling, a safe, stable and undisturbed environment is conducive to creativity, especially for participants who have experienced trauma, loss and emotional disorders. It is important to establish a sense of trust and security. The space does not need to be very large, and it can be used to place creative materials and display some works so that teenagers can sit down and draw comfortably. In the selection of art materials, the tutor can choose some simple and easy to use, for teenagers who are difficult to start. Fewer materials -- pencils, oil sticks, watercolors, and paper can help them get out of the tangle and more creative. For participants with painting experience, they can choose color pencils, markers, gouache, etc. Each pen has different characteristics, soft and hard, thick and thin, thick and light, smooth and rough, all are the projection of inner emotions. For those who are difficult to write and shy, they can choose the form of collage and prepare some magazines, scissors and glue so that they can freely choose and express themselves easily.

Schools in our country generally pay more attention to evaluation, since childhood, children have been comparing their painting skills with others. Due to the

fear of negative evaluation, it is difficult for them to present their innermost thoughts and feelings, which stifles their creativity in ignorance and even affects their ability to think, analyze and express things.

3. CHARACTERISTICS AND MECHANISM OF PAINTING THERAPY

Painting therapy is different from general art activities and art education. They both emphasize creativity and take artistic creation as the main way of expression. The biggest difference is that art education often takes teaching principles as the framework of art activities, and constantly learns and refines art techniques in the form of class, and takes improving the "aesthetic feeling" of works as the ultimate pursuit. And painting therapy is targeted to provide a safe, held environment for adolescents, with the goal of emotional relief and mental health, it does not pursue the beauty of works, but stimulates the creation and imagination of teenagers in the process of painting, and cultivates the ability of concentration, good awareness and dare to take responsibility. It's a method of generating positive emotions by unblocking thoughts.

Painting can play a therapeutic role in human psychology, first of all determined by physiological function. Sperry's split brain experiment showed that the left and right hemispheres have different divisions of labor, with the left hemisphere responsible for rational thinking such as language, calculation and logic, while the right hemisphere processes perceptual information such as pictures, music and imagination. The functions of the two hemispheres are one-sided and their respective divisions of labor are different, which is commonly known as "the key of the left brain cannot open the lock of the right brain". As a traditional way of psychological counseling, verbal communication is effective in correcting some psychological confusion caused by unreasonable thinking or belief. However, traumatic experience, emotional disorders and other emotional feelings exist in the right brain and will be remembered in the form of images, so it is difficult to generate links only through words. While painting presents the subconscious on paper, intuitively floating as a part of consciousness, becoming the key to analysis and treatment.

Brain research has confirmed that visual arts provide a unique way to express trauma. As early as the early 20th century, Freud used "image", "mental image" and even the image in dream as the psychotherapy method in psychoanalysis. He focused on experiencing emotions and thoughts in the visual form, believing that as long as dreams can be drawn, the sense of regret in reality can be reduced. His student, Jung, later encouraged patients to draw dream situations to overcome their inner conflicts. He believed that symbolic representations of emotional problems could be more clearly understood and more authentic.

Painting therapy is based on projection, which in analytical psychology is considered to be an activity in which the unconscious actively expresses itself. It is the reflection of the activity of "free will" in the will, that is to say, it is not determined by human consciousness. The most typical and free form of projection is dream, followed by art. It can even be said that projection exists in every choice and thought of human beings. Therapists believe that painting is the natural self expression tool of human beings and the subconscious content of self-expression with nonverbal symbolic tools. ^[5]In terms of effectiveness, other techniques of psychological projection like painting, such as Rorschach inkstain test and thematic apperception test, have been repeatedly proved by scientific experiments, and have been widely used in psychological counseling and various psychological tests, becoming a powerful and intuitive tool to understand visitors. Painting technology can not only be applied to psychological testing, but also can be used for painting psychological analysis and painting therapy, with strong functionality and universality.

Most of people's thinking and memory are visual, and paintings with the characteristics of visibility can indeed help people understand and solve problems more intuitively. In particular, some memories are preverbal and can't be expressed verbally at all, or some traumatic memories are repressed deep enough that they can't be picked up by language and can't be cured through traditional psychotherapy using communication; Painting itself is of value neutrality, drawn by the content and the symbol doesn't stand or fall of beauty and ugliness, not like a speech full of praise and judgment, therefore particularly adept at expressing inner part of the dark, those unknown dare not touch place, often deep depression and buried, and can normal expression way for painting. Especially in the growth and development of teenagers, self-esteem, easy to moral judgment, high requirements for concealment and security, it is easy to be judged right and wrong because of the attributes of words difficult to speak. Painting removes these constraints, and individuals are encouraged to express impulses, contradictions and emotions. With the deepening of therapy, these energies have the opportunity to turn from destruction to vitality, and turn decadent into magic. This is the power of transformation brought by painting creation.

Painting has the natural advantage of giving emotional forms. As a favorable tool to express emotions, it can interpret the inner and subconscious content of people's minds in a form that can be understood and analyzed, intuitive and visual interpretation on paper. ^[6]In addition, people have a low defense against painting, especially the young people in the current new era. Growing up in the "two-dimension" social background, more and more young people are exposed to painting. Compared with the traditional

verbal psychological counseling and psychological education, painting can make them unconsciously reveal themselves. The inner contradictions, conflicts, emotions and concepts are projected into the paintings, so that the repressed memories and hidden information can be released in the creation process, and the good wishes and expectations can also be rebuilt. In the process of painting, individuals can further think, clarify their thoughts, transform the intangible into tangible, and transform the inner from abstract to concrete.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF THERAPISTS IN ADOLESCENT PAINTING THERAPY

No matter it is individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, parent-child therapy, couple therapy, in all painting therapy, the relationship between the client, therapist and work is the basis of all therapy. In adolescent painting therapy, adolescents can be normal young adults. It can also be a special group of people who cannot express themselves well, have resistance to speech therapy, have poor speech, or even have brain damage and autism; Paintings can be thematic and serial, or free and graffiti; The infinite expression of a variety of subjects, instruments, and forms; There are few criteria and requirements for either of these, but for the healer to successfully construct the therapeutic relationship of all three, it is necessary to be a well-prepared, professional, patient, self-aware and constantly learning person.

The operation and implementation of painting therapy is more flexible, and the process of therapy may integrate a variety of therapeutic ideas, schools and techniques, so it is difficult to carry out without a solid learning background. An art therapist must have artistic experience and cultivation, because in the daily treatment process cannot predict the performance of visitors, some people will even cry loudly, if there is no solid foundation, it is difficult to deal with the unexpected situation. If the treatment is not timely or appropriate, it may bring more pain to the visitor. Especially young people, personality development is not stable, easy to form psychological trauma; At the same time, each healer often has complex, through the experience of art to continue to deepen their own, improve the ability of self-awareness, self-healing, self-breakthrough, self-growth, to understand and experience more of the meaning of life. Only therapists walk far, can understand the foot of the road is difficult to walk; And only by themselves, jumping over the deep pits, then they understand the process and are better able to help visitors navigate potholes and obstacles.

Professional training and a patient attitude are essential qualities for therapists and counselors to help young people, whether at school or at home. Compared with various techniques, the patient and earnest companionship, appreciation, attention, and empathy of

the mentor will produce more power than the analysis and interpretation of the work. In general, the personnel carrying out painting therapy should have the following attitude:

1. Acceptance. This is the premise of establishing a helping and coaching relationship. Unconditional acceptance of all participants, including speech, behavior, manners, dress, tolerance of shortcomings and shortcomings, value and appreciate their strong points. Therapists should be able to act as a good container and "catch" teenagers with the spirit of holding, so that the other side will trust them and express their true and unrestrained input.

2. Respect. Teenagers are not fully mature individuals, but counselors should treat them as people with independent personality and autonomy, especially adolescents with inferiority, often accompanied by high sensitivity. No coercion, no evaluation, no authoritative attitude, authority concept "lessons" to guide the youth, will become the cornerstone of building a good relationship with the participants.

3. Sincerely. As the saying goes, "Faith will move mountains." To enter the hearts of participants all rely on the word "Sincerely.". Sincerity is connected with respect, and true respect cannot be achieved without sincerity. In the process of treatment, we should sincerely face teenagers and sincerely express our feelings. Be honest and open with your inner feelings as needed.

4. Warmth. Therapists should always convey the feelings of attention, kindness, tolerance, understanding, affirmation, support, acceptance and welcome to participants, not only through language, but also through more nonverbal expressions, such as eyes, tone, smile, etc. When teenagers feel love and care, they will open themselves. Warmth is the most important and therapeutic quality that needs to be conveyed in therapy.

5. Focus. To seriously understand the psychological state of teenagers, including their creation, "do not disturb" does not mean that they do not pay attention to, on the contrary, therapists need to carefully observe and record the every move of participants in the painting process, from the selection of materials and appliances to the completion of the final work. Only by concentrating can we find the emotional changes in the creation and find the breakthrough of therapy.

6. Reflection. In the process of therapy, the healer needs to be as aware of his own feelings as possible and record them. At the end of the counseling, combined with the homework of teenagers, fully think and summarize, rational use of counter-transference. And use these reflections in future therapy, according to the specific situation discuss with participants and sort out the works again.

5. CONCLUSION

Compared with traditional psychotherapy, painting art therapy uses non-verbal forms to "shape" the subconscious mind, which is easy to use and interesting. It is easy to let teenagers put down their resistance and establish a good teaching relationship with them. It is not limited by location, environment, number of people and other conditions, and does not require cognitive ability and painting skills. It plays an obvious role in resolving anxiety and other emotions, and can also sublimate the mental state of teenagers. Of these, visual art, confidentiality and professionalism are the three most important. At present, there are few studies on painting therapy in mainland China. Therefore, it is very necessary to strengthen the professional training of therapists to ensure that painting therapy is carried out in a formal, professional and ethical environment. It is believed that if it can be further carried out in schools in the future, more students will benefit from it.

REFERENCES

- [1] Guo Nianfeng. (1995) Clinical Psychology . Science Press, Beijing,pp.90.
- [2] Eric Erickson.(2021)Identity and Personality Development . World Book Publishing Company, Beijing,pp.22.
- [3] Xia Qingqi, Wu Xuelian.(2020)Meng Peixin: Art is the most gentle, and is direct to the heart of the people . Art Contemporary.J.42-45.
- [4] Zhang Yunqing.(2012)On Psychological Resistance in the process of Teenagers' moral Education.pp.2-7.
- [5] Gao Nan.(1988)Psychology of art.Liaoning People's Publishing House,Liaoning,pp.187.
- [6] Jung C.G.(1960)The transcendent function.Princeton Univ Press,Princeton,PP.273-274.