

# Art Therapy as a Means of Psychological Correction of Emotional Disorders

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**Abstract:** *The article reveals the essence and specificity of psychologically corrective work with the help of art therapy in the theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem of correction of emotional disorders. Types of emotional disorders, their causes, and also directions of art therapy and some rules of introduction of art therapy techniques in psychologically corrective practice are considered. Some psychological recommendations for the use of isotherapy methods in the correction of emotional disorders, compliance with which can attest to the high professional competence of the consultant in mastering art therapy techniques have been developed. Art therapy work is offered for consideration as emotional "auto-training" of harmonious interaction with the social environment, a strategy of preservation of emotional health and a psychological means of self-help of the self-sufficient person for the purpose of prevention of emotional deviations. The use of art-therapeutic means is offered to consider as innovative health-saving technology. Theoretical and methodological developments in the introduction of art therapy in the psychologically corrective process by foreign and domestic researchers, which can be considered as successful recommendations for the use of art therapy techniques for the psychocorrection of emotional disorders are summarized.*

**Keywords:** *Neurotic states; depressive states; fears; phobias; client; isotherapy methods; psychotherapeutic areas; psychological approaches; health-saving technologies.*

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## **Introduction**

The modern human world is filled with difficult uncertain situations - social crises and periods of quarantine associated with epidemics and loss of relationships, relatives, jobs. Crisis situations cause painful experiences, feelings of loneliness and despair, experiences from frustrations to unbearable grief. Chronic course of negative emotions, their intensity and frequency can cause personal dysfunctions, emotional burnout, depressive states and various problems of emotional character. In such critical situations, the personality relieves traumatic experiences due to sublimation in art, creative activity, with the help of art therapy means of life psychology.

Purposeful application of art therapy as a scientific direction in psychotherapy and psychological correction is used in psychological practice as a totality of techniques providing assistance in the correction of emotional disorders and psychological development of personality. The methodological bases for introduction of art therapy into psychologically corrective practice and the problem of efficiency of psychological influences of art therapy means on human mental activity do not lose their urgency and have been well studied by foreign and domestic psychology, however, correction methods of using art therapy in cases of emotional disorders and specialists' recommendations on the use of art therapy as an innovative health-saving to prevent emotional deviations - the essence of the purpose of our article, its novelty and practical relevance are not developed enough technology (Demchenko, 2021; Komogorova, 2021; Palamarchuk, 2020). Art therapy work has been proposed as an emotional "auto-training," the harmonization of positive interaction with the social environment, a factor in the formation of positive "Ego-concept; innovative health-saving mental health technology; psychological means of personal self-help to prevent emotional disorders and apply in the practice of educational psychological services, medical institutions and public volunteer organizations that develop recommendations for personal psychohygiene and development of human emotional well-being.

## **Theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem of psychological correction of emotional disorders with the help of art therapy**

Emotional disorders include neurotic and depressive states, neurotic conflicts with a spectrum of negative emotional manifestations, high anxiety, phobias and fears. The reasons for their occurrence are often a combination

of biological (residual-organic insufficiency, which can cause lability of affect, increased distress and mental inertness and fixation on negative experiences, etc.), psychological (features of the emotional-volitional sphere and inadequate emotional reactions to stresses and pathocharacteriological manifestations: weak self-control, withdrawal, anxious vulnerability, pedantry, conformity and dependence, naivety or directness, psychomotor instability, etc.) and social-psychological (destructive, conflictual relations with others, excessive control and authoritarianism by others, chronic stresses and crises).

Psychologists and psychotherapists know that one of the most effective methods of psychological correction of emotional disorders is art therapy with its variety of directions: game therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, animation therapy, library therapy, clay therapy, drama therapy, isotherapy, storytelling therapy, film therapy, color therapy, landscape therapy, puppet therapy, mandalotherapy, laugh therapy and photo therapy, etc. Practitioners distinguish the following types of art therapy: passive (involving analysis and interpretation of drawings, pictures, photographs, etc.), active art therapy as independent creative activity, a combination of passive and active art therapy.

Art therapy or art therapy is a relatively new method of psychotherapy. The term was first used by Adrian Hill in 1938 when describing his work with patients with tuberculosis and soon became widespread. A. Hill applied drawing with people for therapeutic purposes. Art therapy is the creation of visual images, awareness of unconscious psychological material through these images, interaction between the author of the artwork, the artwork itself and the therapist, providing a protective environment for the manifestation of strong experiences (Andrushko, 2017, p. 75). Art therapy is a method of developing and changing the conscious and unconscious aspects of a person's psyche with the help of different forms and types of art, (Karpenko, 2015, p. 46). We consider art therapy work as an emotional "auto-training", harmonization of positive interaction with the social environment, a factor in the formation of positive "Ego-concept", an innovative health-saving technology of mental health, a psychological means of self-help for self-sufficient individuals to prevent emotional disorders.

The basic methods of psychologically correcting emotional disorders in children include those that are basic in the psychodynamic and behavioral areas. These include art therapy. The art therapy method was proposed by

psychoanalysts for the correction of the child's emotional and personal problems as early as the 1930s. Art therapy is a specialized form of psychotherapy based on visual art. The primary goal of art therapy consists in development of self-expression and self-knowledge of the child. In practice, there are two forms of art therapy - passive and active. In the passive form of art therapy, the child considers pictures, products, i.e. consumes artwork. In active art therapy, the child creates activity products. Children's drawings reflect not only the level of mental development and individual personality traits, but are also a kind of projection of personality. Drawing acts as a reinforcement of the child's sense of identity and helps children learn about themselves and their abilities (Mamaychuk, 2006).

Art therapy exists in individual and group forms. The individual form is used in work with adults and children, as well as in psychiatry: for persons to whom verbal psychotherapy cannot be applied; patients with superficial mental disorders of a neurotic character; People with verbalization problems (autism, stuttering, etc.) and post-traumatic stress disorder. The individual psychotherapeutic process occurs, for the most part, on the basis of the psychodynamic approach - investigation of the unconscious on products of visual activity. The non-directive nature of work is predominantly applied. The art therapist acts flexibly, adjusting to the individual rhythm and stylistic features of the client's activity, trying to act on the dynamics of his or her states. Models of art therapy include: psychodynamic: psychoanalytic, Jungian, group; humanistic (client-centered); family (paired drawings); game model; clinical model; holistic model (integration of experience at all levels); transpersonal model; eclectic model (Karpenko, 2015).

B. Nikitin (2014) in the methodology of art therapy theory considers creativity as an expression of "the inner through the outer" and a work of art as a product of creating a sign structure "from within oneself": looking into one's creative work, one recognizes something in oneself that is not accessible to perception at the level of rational consciousness, which does not lend itself to an exact interpretation. Nikitin states that art therapy is, in essence, an integrative interdisciplinary formation. Representatives of Gestalt psychology focus on the analysis of the nature of the subject's perception of artistic images, on the interpretation of the phenomenological and existential aspects of the creator's self-expression. According to psychoanalysis, unrealized feelings and needs are displaced from consciousness into the unconscious. The displaced content is of a traumatic nature and requires resolution. Artistic action acts as an act of manifestation of the displaced

intention, giving it a completed semantic form. Hence, the information hidden in the artistic image makes it possible to reveal the sides of its "inner" being relevant to the subject.

Art therapist T.M. Kuzmenko (2018) presented the author's development of psychological art tools "Set of metaphorical associative images and matrices for psychological counseling and psychocorrection "Balance of Life". Metaphorical associative images in the art therapy process are a certain material field for metaphorical interaction, allowing a new way of looking at situations and finding a way to solve them. The health-saving resource of the offered psychotherapeutic activity allows to considerably reduce the psychological and emotional load both on the client and on the psychologist, which allows to raise considerably the level of effectiveness of the psychological counseling and psychologically corrective process. A national researcher suggests that the purpose of art therapy is to preserve or restore the health of the individual, harmonize personal development through the development of self-expression and self-knowledge, and adaptation to the environment. Creativity helps you understand and appreciate your feelings, memories, images of the future, find time to renew your vitality and a way to communicate with yourself. Art therapy as a means of nonverbal communication is valuable for those who have trouble describing their experiences in words (it is known that trauma is imprinted at the levels of bodily and emotional experiences and imaginative images). The art therapy methodology assumes unconditional acceptance of the client in any of his or her manifestations.

Emotional disorders are often associated with difficulties in social adaptation, inadequate emotional reactions to external stressors, poor emotional-volitional self-regulation, emotional malaise amid hostility, resentment, dissatisfaction and neuropsychological tension due to emotions. Thus, domestic researchers S. M. Tomchuk, M. I. Tomchuk (2018) consider in detail destructive mental states of personality, which can be associated with a variety of emotional disorders, with anxiety, anxieties, fears and aggressiveness. Moon, Bruce L. (2008), in turn, shared practical experiences of trauma survivor therapy using art therapy, which can be a valuable resource for medical and mental health professionals, occupational therapists, and other rehabilitation professionals who seek to become more effective in providing psychological care to others. Leslie G. Eaton, Kimberly L. Doherty, B.S. Rebeka, M. Widrick B.A. (2007) in turn confirm

the effectiveness of art therapy as a treatment method for children who have experienced a traumatic event.

O. L. Voznesenska and M. Yu. Sydorkina (2016) examined in detail art therapy as a method of helping a person in a crisis period, described art therapy methods and techniques for application in work with psychological traumas, in the period of burning, recovery of post-traumatic events, rehabilitation of combatants and volunteers in a state of emotional burnout. I. I. Mamaychuk (2006) considers art therapy as a method of correction of emotional disorders in children; the psychologically corrective technologies offered by the author have been tested in the course of many years of experience working with children and teenagers with problems in psychological development. Kuzmenko (2018) well substantiated the theoretical and practical aspects of the use of innovative art therapy techniques in the process of psychocounseling and psychocorrection. Harald Gruber, Renate Oepen (2018) described the weighty psychological role of art therapy for psychological models of emotion regulation.

Empirical studies of introduction of art therapy techniques into psychological practice by foreign specialists are conducted actively. In this case, A. C. Abbing, E. W. Baars, O. Van Haastrecht, and A. S. Ponstein (2019) assure that art therapy causes positive results in clinical practice, but the mechanisms of its psychological effects are poorly understood. Therefore it is important to systematically describe the process of art-therapeutic intervention and identify the mechanisms at work in order to evaluate them. Researchers have applied art therapy methods in the correction of anxiety disorders (the most common among them are phobias, social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder). Art therapy has a variety of subtypes based on different points of view from psychoanalysis and cognitive-analytical therapy to humanistic approaches focused on the client's personality. One of these subspecies is anthroposophic art therapy (AAT). Anthroposophical art therapists work from a holistic view of the individual, not focusing on the primary symptoms of the person, but rather viewing the personality as an integrity of the physical, psychosocial and biographical aspects. Therapy aims to gain insight into the processes underlying the primary symptoms and aims to initiate a holistic healing process in which the client is empowered to actively work on their well-being, including the reduction of primary symptoms, in particular high anxiety. The goal of AAT is that anxiety is not dealt with consciously or "cognitively" because it keeps patients in their "thinking mode" that will allow worry and thinking. AAT, applied through specific

artistic tasks, addresses to the unconscious. Researchers have empirically confirmed the effectiveness of AAT therapy for anxiety disorders, resulting in decreased anxiety, improved emotional self-regulation and increased self-esteem.

Helén Wahlbeck, Linda J. Kvist & Kajsa Landgren (2020) in turn showed that art therapy significantly reduced women's fear of childbirth. Catherine Malboeuf-Hurtubise, Terra Léger-Goodes, Geneviève A. Mageau, Geneviève Taylor, Catherine M. Herba, Nicholas Chadi & David Lefrançois (2021) believe that in crisis, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, children may experience increased anxiety depression and poor mental health in general. Art therapy actualized in them the processes of awareness of new opportunities and ways to overcome the crisis and showed the possibility of improving the emotional well-being of the children and reducing their psychological distress, in particular by drawing mandalas online, remotely. Freilich, R., & Shechtman, Z. (2010) investigated the contribution of art therapy to the social, emotional, and academic adjustment of children with learning disabilities. Elly Scrineab, Katrina McFerranab (2018) highlight the role of music therapy in preventing youth depression. Zoe Moula (2020) identified and summarized types of school-based art therapy interventions and evaluated their effectiveness for children ages 5-12, confirming that art therapy is effective in improving quality of life for children with emotional and behavioral disabilities and building a positive "Ego-concept". Alex McDonald, Sue Holttum & Nicholas St. J. Drey (2019) also confirm the effects of art therapy on positive changes in the social, emotional and mental health of elementary school children.

O. O. Mishkulynets (2018) considered the peculiarities of the use of various techniques of art therapy in psychocorrective work with children with special educational needs in an inclusive environment and found that the effectiveness of art therapy in inclusive education will depend on taking into account the needs, abilities of children, skilled work of specialists to achieve a common goal - to create appropriate conditions for personal development of each child.

Disorder of psycho-emotional states, acute emotional reactions with fears, insults and aggression in critical situations often demand timely and urgent psychological aid and self-help. In order to implement self-help, psychologists recommend techniques of breathing, self-involvement and relaxation; however, the transformation of negative emotional energy takes place over a long period of time and its accumulation also has negative

consequences for psychological health. Besides, goal-oriented self-exposure to certain exercises is sometimes perceived as internally compulsory to a certain extent and does not have the same effect as engaging in creative work or mastering art in a natural, relaxed setting, which can replace psychologically corrective strategies with therapeutic influence. Science knows a lot of cases when a person restored the mental activity and nervous system by creative work after a crisis of psychotrauma. Realization of inner resources, a logical evaluation of a difficult life situation are possible when mental protections of acute psychologically traumatic experiences weaken under the influence of art therapy - a creative strategy that heals itself, releases bodily emotional "impairments" through work with the body, promotes "processing" (understanding) of one's negative emotional experiences, increases one's inner ability to control one's emotional states, and develops resiliency and self-efficacy.

An effective method of psychological correction of neurotic conditions in teenagers is the "neurographics" method of art therapy - a technique of transferring the image of problems or difficult situations into visual images, a tool of visualization and awareness of the problem as a system of questions and answers which on paper find visible connections and become more understandable for perception, allowing finding simple ways out of situations that seem to be confusing. The neurographic method is based on psychological approaches such as Gestalt therapy, Kurt Lewin's "field theory" (which is a method for analyzing life space and in which neurography deals with the personal and environmental field), and K. Jung's theory of geometric symbols and archetypes: circle (the desire to create a harmonious, closed lifestyle), triangle (indicative of "acute" complex issues), polygons (subconscious attempts to link simple forms into complex systems of questions and answers), etc., which resonate through our deep psyche. Neurography is best used in combination with music therapy, storytelling therapy, with techniques of auto-training and body-oriented therapy, which has a positive effect on neurotic symptoms, reducing anxiety and neuropsychiatric tension (Krotenko & Frunze, 2019).

### **Psychological recommendations for the correction of emotional disorders with the help of art therapy**

No doubt, the introduction of psychologically corrective means in art therapy is effective for emotional disorders, in particular, for depressive, neurotic and crisis conditions, a decrease in the emotional tone, lability,

impulsiveness of emotional reactions, emotional deprivation, fears and phobias. Severe emotional disorders can also serve as grounds for conducting art therapy. The important goal of psychologically correcting emotional disorders with art therapy is to improve and maintain psychological health by providing a socially acceptable way out of negative feelings.

During psychologically corrective art therapy (both in individual and group forms), it is appropriate to follow the following general recommendations: first identify the needs and expectations of the client concerning the type or direction of art therapy chosen together with the psychologist and propose observance of the principles of psychological partner work; during the first session, the psychologist needs to make a positive atmosphere of trust, safety and goodwill; in the interpretation of the product of creativity (provided after the edited feelings and basic questions to clarify the subject of creativity) the impression is expressed - "I have the impression...", "I so imagine that..." with appeal to the "Ego - statement", rather than criticism on the quality of the drawing, abilities, etc.; acceptance of the client as a person, showing respect and emotional empathy to him/her and encouraging him/her to reflect; the psychologist's questions about the relationship between the product of creativity and the client's psycho-emotional state or emotional problem - his professional competence in taking into account the individual-psychological, cognitive, emotional-will, motivational characteristics of the client, his resource capabilities, internal conflicts and features of emotional response to psychological traumas; it is expedient to combine art therapy methods with psychotherapeutic techniques - cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, Gestalt therapy approaches; for interpretation of ready-made drawings (pictures) by the client and their choice by the psychologist, the age of the client and features of his or her emotional disorders and personal problems should be taken into account; musical accompaniment (music therapy) should be combined with art therapy, but taking into account the mental condition and desire of the client; the result of the psychologist's psychologically corrective work is an improvement in the emotional state, gratitude and insight from the client.

The psychological recommendations stated concern work mainly with isotherapy methods and adult clients, although they are universal and do not claim to be exhaustive, however, observance of them by the counselor conducting psychological correction of emotional disorders will be indicative of his or her high professional competence in mastering

effective use of art therapy techniques. They can be applied in the practice of educational psychological services, medical institutions and public volunteer organizations developing recommendations for personal psychohygiene and the development of psychological well-being.

The following is a summary of theoretical and methodological developments in the introduction of art therapy into the psychologically corrective process by foreign and domestic researchers, which can be considered as successful recommendations for use of art therapy techniques for the psychologically correction of emotional disorders.

An important principle of art therapy is compulsory approval and acceptance of all products of the child's visual activity, regardless of their content, form and quality. Music therapy is widely used in psychological correction of emotional disorders in children. In the psychological literature such directions of corrective influence of music therapy as emotional activation in the course of verbal psychotherapy and regulating influence on psycho-vegetative processes are distinguished. Traditionally the following variants of music therapy are distinguished: receptive music therapy, which involves the perception of music for corrective purposes, and active, which is corrective directed, active musical activity. Receptive psychological correction helps to achieve catharsis and is capable of lowering nervous and mental tension. Receptive music therapy is expedient to use for the solution of concrete psychologically corrective problems: optimization of communication of members of group, creation of confidential empathic atmosphere of group, decrease in emotional discomfort. Rhythmic music has an activating effect on a child with emotional problems, especially with problems in interpersonal communication. In the process of psychological correction of children with emotional disorders, it is expedient to use various psychological corrective techniques with mandatory consideration of the severity of the emotional problem, the direction of the conflict, the features of the social environment surrounding the child, and the child's individual psychological characteristics (Mamaychuk, 2006).

Neuropsychologists suggest that neuropsychological analysis of disturbances in perception and depiction of an object shows how distortions in drawing are associated with lesions of different levels of the visual system, conflict in emotional attitudes and understanding of the artistic image. In case of emotional disorders, the spatial parameters of the drawing can be disfigured, excessive schematization of elements of the image, deliberate exaggeration of some subjects and diminution of sizes of other subjects (foreground and background). How does the concept of "composition"

relate to art-therapy methodology? A therapeutic action is an event structured in space and time. The psychologist finds such a compositional solution to a problem in which all elements of a significant event are connected at a new, more productive level of relations. Thus, the interpretation of the nature of the subject's perception of the problem situation can be carried out in the process of researching the results of its compositional construction. The artistic image is considered as a projection of its actual meanings, relations and significance of aspects of life. Distortion of the character of the logic of construction of the image testifies to cognitive and emotional-sensory disorders, about internal and external conflicts of the individual. In affective disorders, there is redundancy, incoherence in the depiction of the details of the composition, unreasonableness in the choice of the central element of the image (Nikitin, 2014).

Recently, art therapy has begun to be actively used in treatment and rehabilitation work with combatants who have psycho-emotional disorders, consequences of psychotraumatic stress disorder, manifestations of destructive emotional states, etc. It is connected with the fact that art therapy has no contraindications, and is effective in the correction of various disabilities; it can be applied individually and in group sessions. Given the choice of individual art therapy, it is important to establish psychotherapeutic contact, which occurs at the first meetings. At the same time, both the art therapist and the participant have reactions to each other (they are not always positive), which will further influence the atmosphere of the art therapy process. The art therapist explains in detail the purpose, features, character and conditions of art therapy work. If the participant agrees on the rules of art-therapy work, a "protective" contract of both the client and the art therapist is made, forming responsibility of both parties for the obligations undertaken. Sometimes the participant can have negative feelings - fear, guilt, anger, resentment, rage, etc., which it is not recommended to restrain. During drawing, for example, the technique "My past," various memories that are "worked through" in the discussion stage can reveal themselves. The art therapist tries to establish a connection between the character of the person's visual activity, the experience of childhood, relations with other people and the problems characteristic of the given period of life. The duration of individual art therapy depends on the general condition of the participant, improvement of his or her psycho-

emotional state, the nature of the visual activity - from several months to a year or more (Bryndikov, 2017).

The structure of art therapy session includes the following consecutive stages: setting up for creativity (training participants for spontaneous art activity and intragroup communication; games, motor and dance exercises, and simple pictorial techniques can be used for this); actualization of visual, auditory and kinesthetic sensations (for this purpose, it is possible to apply drawing in combination with elements of musical and dance therapy, which improve mood and stimulate the will to recovery, it is better to choose melodious compositions without text, and the volume should be adjusted in interaction with participants); individual visual activity - means individual creativity for research of own problems and experiences (the process of spontaneous creativity, the emotional state of the client, his/her inner world are important here, this stage assumes indirect diagnostics at interpretation of drawings according to criteria of known projective techniques, but it is necessary to avoid generality and to take into account subjective factors of the author, for example, a mental state); activation of verbal and nonverbal communication (creation of conditions for intragroup communication, each participant is invited to show their work and tell about it - the degree of openness and frankness of self-presentation depends on the level of trust in the group, the art therapist and the author's personal features, if they refuse to talk, then do not insist; Collective work in small groups (participants invent a plot and play short plays; translation of traumatic experiences into a comic form leads to catharsis, release from unpleasant feelings and emotions); the reflective stage, which should take place in an atmosphere of emotional warmth, empathy, care (this allows the participant of an art therapy session to experience a situation of success in this or that activity). The duration of art therapy sessions can vary considerably - up to 12 sessions - short-term, up to one year - medium-term, several years - long-term; and also the position of the psychotherapist, which can be directive and nondirective. The latter is determined not only by the theoretical orientation of the psychotherapist, but also by his or her personal characteristics (Karpenko, 2015).

In psychologically corrective work with emotional disorders, mandalas (a circle or center in Sanskrit) are also used in cases of fear of losing control, pessimism and depression, accumulated frustration and aggression, emotional hypersensitivity or vice versa, alexithymia (difficulty in regulating feelings, emotions), a sense of deadlock, fears and anxieties, developmental crisis (age, personality), psychosomatic problems. There are

rules of work of the psychologist with the client when using the mandala: if work with coloring mandalas is planned, then several are offered - let the client himself choose the form, the ornamentation, and the one that is closer to his mood; the client chooses the mandala and the plot of the work without the help of others; the materials for work and the color scheme (pencils, felt-tip pens, paints, pastels, ink, etc.) the client chooses independently; the work process is limited only by the degree of satiation, satiety and satisfaction with the work; the psychologist fixes the state of tension/relaxation connected with the work process; the principle of noninterference in the work of the child, teenager, or adult without his or her consent is observed; and the principle of avoiding evaluative comments about the work; the client, if desired, gives the name of his or her mandala both painted and created; after work, it is important to give the client an opportunity to talk about his or her own feelings, feelings about the mandala and attitude to the result (correct leading questions are allowed) (Andrushko, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Art therapy work is offered for consideration as an emotional "auto-training," harmonious interaction with the outside world, health-saving technology and psychological means of self-help for the self-sufficient individual to prevent emotional disorders. Art therapy has a psychologically corrective (therapeutic) influence, activating the subject's reflection of the inner world through creative products, providing psychological support and opportunities for psychological self-support, and being a creative way of self-expression and self-discovery. The method of art therapy is based on the mechanism of projection of emotional experiences of the personality of the client, which psychocorrection successfully enough uses as a subject of study with the purpose of restoration of its health-saving resource and improvement of the effectiveness of correction of emotional disorders. Art therapy activates the subject's inner mechanisms of emotional self-regulation and promotes emotional healing through creativity - and its products, in turn, have valuable content for psychological analysis, reflecting the emotional world of the individual in conscious and unconscious displays.

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