

Creative Counseling: An Experiential Session



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Rationale for this Presentation

- The creative arts promotes identification and exploration of interpersonal stressors distinctive to client's concerns and situations. By reinforcing effective communication skills and impulse control, the creative arts empowers counselors and clients to use creative outlets to extinguish ineffective coping mechanisms, relax, and heal.
- Creative approaches are shown to be more effective with a variety of populations.
- What's the point of doing something if you can't have fun with your career?

Icebreaker

- All participants stand at you seat.
- A beach ball will be tossed from person to person.
- Read and answer out loud the question that your left thumb lands on.
- Toss the ball to the person of your choice!

Creativity defined

- Oxford English Dictionary Online - creativity is the ability to use the imagination, original ideas, or appropriate, especially in the production of an artistic work.
- Samuel Gladding (2004, p. 67) defines creativity as an ability to produce work that is “innovative, and is a necessity for a person to live a rich and fulfilling existence.”
- Cole and Sarnoff (1979) postulates that creativity promotes human growth and development.

Why creativity?

- According to Carson and Becker (2004), “creativity can often be the water that quenches dry throats in the deserts and points the way to an oasis.”
- Creativity challenges both the counselor and client to “think outside the box.”
- Creativity includes figuring out how to solve problems.
- In Gershoni and Lipman (2006), J. L. Moreno identifies the key to mental health as the ability to be creative. Also, Moreno states it is up to the potential of all people to find and use their own creativity and not limit themselves to verbal or intellectual tools for self expression.

Why Creativity?

- Facilitates communication independent of IQ. (Client does not have to be an artist or gifted).
- Provides a way of bypassing guilt and shame.
- Unlocks meaning and feelings that extend beyond communication and connect the client and counselor.
- Serves as a buffer for diverse individuals and promote positive, collaborative relationships.
- Keeps client engaged in therapy.

Creativity in Counseling

- According to Frey (1975), “counseling is actually a creative enterprise within which client and counselor combine their resources to generate a new plan, develop a different outlook, formulate alternative benefits, begin a new life.”
- Frey (1975) stated “creativity requires that we acknowledge the fact that counselors cannot cause change in persons without those persons’ participation and vigorous commitment, to acknowledge that there are few ready-made tricks and gimmicks, to acknowledge that the client is a partner in our quest.”

Creativity and Counseling: What's the Link

Beverly Huffstetler (as cited in Gladding, 2004, p. 66) found four facts on the correlation of creativity and counseling:

1. Creative people share many of the same characteristics as psychologically healthy people.
2. Creativity means looking at a situation from many new angles while keeping reality in mind.
3. Creativity can be taught (or at least encouraged).
4. There are many creative techniques that counselors can employ to encourage the development of creativity in clients.

Assumptions of Creativity

- Creativity begets creativity
- Counselors get “stuck” with clients
- Creativity is born of frustration or the need of a solution
- Counselors are the least creative when they try to be creative

Benefits of Creativity

- Creative art therapy is more appropriate when working with clients who feel uncomfortable sharing their feelings in traditional talk therapy and are open to change while still keeping fairly effective coping methods.
- These methods include promoting client awareness, problem solving, goal setting, modeling appropriate behavior, identifying motivators and barriers to obtaining goals, and practicing acceptance .
- Creativity can be used to make sense of the client's experiences.

Benefits of Creativity Continued

- Increases or maintains client's wellness.
- Strengthens clients communications skills.
- Empowers the client by giving them a sense of control over their life experiences.
- Allows client to explore personal feelings, making positive changes in behavior.
- Promotes authenticity and trust.

Limitations to Creativity

- Client's cultural values/worldview may interfere with the creative arts.
- Some clients may view the counselor as an authority figure who will solve their problems or give advice.
- Other clients may be offended by the use of creative arts instead of specific techniques.
- Some clients may not be able to see how “creative arts” can help them.

What are the creative arts?

- The Creative Arts are those art forms that have been invented resourcefully, and they can be divided into two categories:
 - Nonverbal: visual art, mandalas, journaling music, mime, and dance.
 - Verbal: psychodrama, poetry, games, humor, and bibliotherapy

Breakout groups

- 3 groups:
 - Clinical Mental Health
 - School Counseling
 - Couples/Family Therapy

Activity 1

“It’s My Life CD”

- Explore favorite artist/groups and song.
- Why is the artist/group and song significant in your life?
- What is the experience surrounding that song?
- Think of significant moments in your life and create a playlist. The goal is that someone should be able to listen to that playlist and have a deeper understanding of your life experiences.

Create the Soundtrack to your Life!

- Think of significant events and a corresponding song.
- List the songs sequentially with respect to the events/experiences.

Process Time!

- Goals:
 - Establish a non-threatening therapeutic environment.
 - Gather information about client's life and perceptions of their past.
- Think about how you could process this activity with your clients.
- What are some of the important process questions to ask?

Activity 2

“I Said it, Now What?”

- Think about the last negative comment you made about yourself, someone else, or something else.
- Restate the comment while drawing a line on a piece of paper. The length of the line should represent the amount of time it took to make the statement.
- Trace the line with toothpaste.

Now, Clean it up!

- With a toothpick, get the toothpaste back into the tube.

Process Time!

- Goals:
 - Create a visual to the damage of words.
 - Help client understand that once something is said it can never fully be taken back.
- Think about how you could process this activity with your clients.
- What are some of the important process questions to ask?

Bonus

Activity 3

- Look under the seat!
- Find your group...

Process Time!

- Goals:
 - To help clients identify feelings.
 - To assist clients in seeing that each person displays feelings differently.
- Think about how you could process this activity with your clients.
- What are some of the important process questions to ask?

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