

Art Therapy: Coping Mechanism for Anxiety

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Abstract: *"Painting is just another way of keeping a diary. "-Pablo Picasso. "The emotions are sometimes so strong that I work without knowing it. The strokes come like speech. "-Vincent van Gogh. "What is art?" is a question that philosophers, authors, musicians, and visual artists of many mediums have pondered for a long time, many has described it as a way of expressing their feelings whereas some use art as a way of communication to others while spreading awareness through posters, pamphlets, etc. Art can be anything, it has no limits. The mere step of creating a picture can sometimes be beneficial in terms of reducing anxiety. Coloring mandalas and using them as a kind of meditation is a common way to do this. Art has been employed as a kind of destressing and relaxation in the context of mental health, particularly when it comes to anxiety. It has been discovered that Mandala creating and coloring aid to soothe a person with anxiety. This type of art therapy is becoming increasingly popular among both adults and children. Art therapy, as we all know, empowers anyone to express oneself aesthetically rather than verbally. When a client is catastrophizing, verbal expression can be challenging. Feelings of overwhelm can make verbal communication difficult, negatively impacting the client's sense of their ability to manage their feelings and ideas. Individuals who experience anxiety have been demonstrated to benefit greatly from art therapy. Comprehending art therapy and the research that surrounds it illustrates that this complementary treatment option has benefited people of all ages and backgrounds. Art therapy can help people overcome anxiety by allowing them to relax, express themselves, and become more self-aware. Art therapy, when used as part of a full treatment plan, can be a genuinely transforming therapeutic option for people struggling with Anxiety.*

Keywords: Art, Anxiety, Mandala, Art Therapy, Art analysis, Stress, Anxiety management plan

1. Introduction

Art therapy is established on this idea that self-expression through aesthetic innovation has healing value for those who represent curing or seeking a deeper understanding of themselves and their personalities. According to the American art Therapy organization, art therapists are educated to see the characters that color, quality, and different creation media will make in the healing process and how these tools can help reveal one's thoughts, feelings, And mental disposition. Art therapy incorporates therapy and visual arts as the specialized, stand-alone kind of therapy, but it is also utilized in combination with different types of therapy.

Diverse perspectives exist on the history of art therapy, which complements those that focus on the institutionalization of art therapy as a profession in Britain and the United States. (Potash, J. S. & Ramirez, W. A.) (Kalmanowitz, D. & Lloyd, B.) (G.) It can be used to express the feelings of others or even help them feel better about themselves. Art is an expression of human emotion, and it is often used to express the emotions of others. The use of art for therapeutic purposes has been widely accepted by psychologists and psychiatrists. The use of art in therapy is not limited to just the treatment of depression. It is also used to heal emotional wounds and other psychological disorders. In fact, many psychologists believe that art can be used as a tool to heal emotional wounds. In this paper, I will discuss how art can be used to heal emotional wounds and mental illnesses, especially regarding anxiety. Anxiety is a common disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. It is caused by an imbalance between the brain's ability to process information and its inability to cope with stress. Anxiety is a major cause of stress in the world today, and it

can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and even death. It is also known as the 'silent killer'. As the title suggests **"ART THERAPY: COPING MECHANISM FOR ANXIETY "**, many therapists add art in the treatment plans, regardless of the client's age and gender who are struggling with anxiety. the significance of this study is to explore how art can be used to help people deal with their anxiety. The research will focus on the effects of art therapy on anxiety and how art therapy can be used in a treatment plan for person with anxiety.

Anxiety as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) as "a sensation of tension, anxious thoughts, and bodily changes such as elevated blood pressure. "

Understanding the difference between normal anxiety and an anxiety disorder that necessitates medical treatment can aid in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease.

Excessive fear and anxiety cause anxiety, which is a mental and behavioral disorders. Fear is an emotional response to a current or perceived threat, while anxiety is focused on the anticipation of a future threat. Anxiety is often described using words like tension, apprehension, and nervousness. We are all stressed out daily, and anxiety can help us prepare for difficult or stressful situations. Relaxation techniques, interests, meditation, entertainment, and interacting with others can all assist us in regulating our anxiety.

Anxiety disorders, however, are characterized by a pattern of excessive or exaggerated anxiety symptoms that disrupt our lives.

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Figure 1: Anxiety as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) as "a sensation of tension, anxious thoughts, and bodily changes such as elevated blood pressure. "

In most cases, we can identify a threat and fear it, but sometimes our fear can cause us to be too anxious in response to any possible threat. Someone with an anxiety disorder fears that they could have a panic attack at any moment, and because of this they find themselves panicking as soon as they feel anxious. This is known as "catastrophic thinking."

The physiological symptoms of anxiety include rapid pounding heart, shortness of breath, sweating, shaking, and trembling. The body goes into a fight or flight mode so that we can remain safe from potential danger. However, when our body floods with adrenaline and fear hormones this leads to a person exhibiting behaviors that can be seen as being bizarre or irrational.

2. Objectives

- To understand the purpose and learn how art and art therapy is to be utilized in a creative process.
- To help people explore self, expression and as a result, build a new coping ability and gain personal

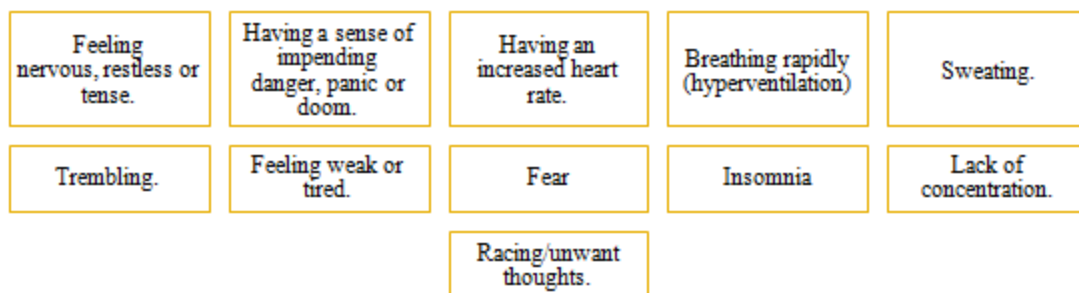


Figure 2: Signs and symptoms of anxiety

Types of Anxiety:

Panic attacks are the most common form of anxiety disorders experienced by sufferers.

understanding as well as to study how art therapy can be used in a treatment plan for anxiety.

Research Questions

- Can art such as mandala making help in coping mechanism for anxiety?
- How does art therapist interpret art for a client with anxiety?

Inclusive and Exclusive Criteria

The inclusive criteria for this paper was selected on the criteria of people who are dealing with anxiety as well as how the use of mandala is done for management of anxiety, the review paper also includes recently published journals under the studies of anxiety, art therapy, mandala use and management under the year between 2019-2017, the inclusive criteria also includes the age group between 18 to 65 years of age who are diagnosed with anxiety.

Exclusion criteria of this review paper is that this review paper does not include people without anxiety as well as people under the age of 18 along with people above the age of 65.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety:

Anxiety is something that everyone experiences from time to time. This applies to adults as well as children. Anxiety tends to come and go for some people, lasting only for few minutes. Anxiety can last anywhere from few minutes to few days depending how long it lasts. While anxiety symptoms differ from person to person, the body reacts to anxiety in a very particular way in general. We are worried, our body goes into high alert, scanning the environment for potential threat and reacting and activating flight or fight reaction. As a result, some of the signs of anxiety are as follows:

Anxiety is a key part of several different disorders. These include:

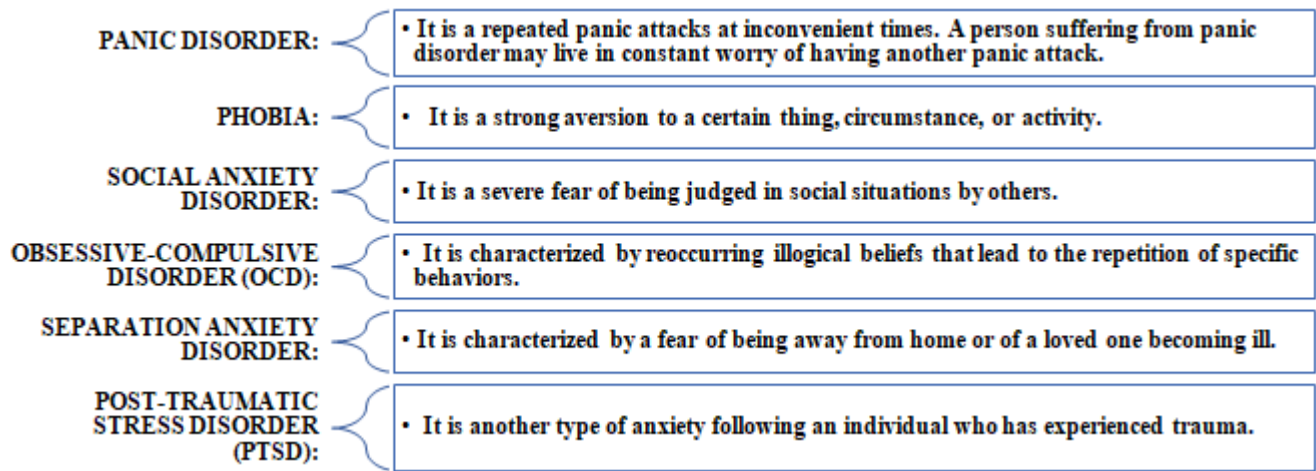


Figure 3: Types of anxiety

What is art therapy

Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that uses active art making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapy relationship to enrich the lives of people, families, and communities. Professional art therapy efficiently supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns when facilitated by a professional art therapist. Art therapy is used to strengthen cognitive and sensorimotor functions, build emotional resilience, stimulate insight, improve social skills, minimize, and resolve disputes and discomfort, and advance societal and ecological transformation. Art therapy is a method of nonverbal communication of thoughts and feelings that is founded on the belief that the creative process of making art is healing and life enhancing (American Art Therapy Association, 1996, in Malchiodi, 2003, p.1). Art therapy is based on the idea that early trauma or developmental conflict is stored in the unconscious in pre-verbal forms of sensory, kinesthetics, or imaginal cognitions and associated emotional experiences represented in symbolic language, rather than being accessible through traditional verbal language (Robbins, 2000; Wadson, 2010).

Analysis of Art-by-Art Therapist

Art therapist analysis art as well as the client. They analysis what colors are uses, how lines are drawn, repetition of certain color or even a particular figure and how the figure is drawn. In view of analysis a client, art therapist focuses on the body language, level of openness and creativity. Regardless of artistic experience or talent, according to a 2016 study published in the Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, less than an hour of creative work can relieve stress and have a favourable influence on your mental health.

With clients ranging from young children to elderly individuals, an art therapist may employ several art methods, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage.

Clients who have suffered from emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, despair, and other psychiatric difficulties may benefit from artistic expression.

Art Therapy as Strategy for Treatment Plan

Art therapy can help individuals. Art therapy exercises, according to the American Art Therapy Association, aim to "grow self-esteem and self-awareness, nurture emotional resilience, enhance insight, and decrease and resolve conflicts and discomfort." This technique, on the other hand, has been studied and confirmed to aid individuals who struggle from anxiety problems.

While all forms of creative expression are useful to us in some way, art therapy is more extensive than many people know. It is more than just sitting quietly with an adult coloring book for an hour. This is a well-researched, well-proven, and professionally implemented treatment alternative that is treating thousands of people in schools, hospitals, military bases, and therapy settings all around the world. Actively participating in artistic and creative activities while being accompanied by a compassionate and professional therapist can help us better process our emotions, learn more about ourselves, and find peace.

People of various ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds have benefited from art therapy.

Art therapy is being used to treat a variety of mental conditions and emotional distress. It may be used in conjunction with other psychotherapy techniques such as group therapy or cognitive-behavioral therapy in many instances. With much of the freedom of dreams, art allows the client to communicate symbolism, metaphor, and feeling. Simultaneously with art, the individual moves in and out of a repertory of practical and psychological abilities that are a part of being a conscious growing individual. According to Keyes (1983), "... using art materials to create images and relating them to feelings and physical states pulls emotions and concepts that have been just dimly experienced into the open." For unfinished matters that demand resolution, closure becomes possible".

Art therapy may be used to treat the following conditions:

Help calm nervous system: Art therapy exercises are peaceful, quiet, and peaceful, which can help relieve stress, anxiety, and irritable symptoms. A tranquil mind can process challenging emotions and events more effectively. Art therapy has been reported to be effective in healing deep

inner issues through meaningful moments of calm by mental health specialists. Individuals gradually become more peaceful in their daily lives because of these encounters.

Encourages the manifestation of one's individuality:

Many of us experience anxiety because of thoughts, feelings, or circumstances that we are unable or unable to express aloud. Art therapy allows us to safely express ourselves. Individuals with anxiety can learn to express themselves in a creative, constructive manner via thinking exercises and the help of a loving and professional therapist. Each of us benefits from creative self-expression because it allows us to connect with our experiences and emotions in a healthy and meaningful way.

Self-awareness is increased: When we engage in creative endeavors, we frequently uncover new qualities of ourselves that we were previously unaware of. This phenomenon is especially noticeable when it occurs during an art therapy session. Individuals get a greater sense of self-awareness through meditative, expressive, and distinctive exercises (such as painting with the non-dominant hand). When we focus on a creative activity, it is much simpler to grasp and identify with feelings and sensations that lurk underneath the surface of our conscious thoughts.

Anxiety Management through Mandala

"I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time. . . Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is. . . the Self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well, is harmonious. "

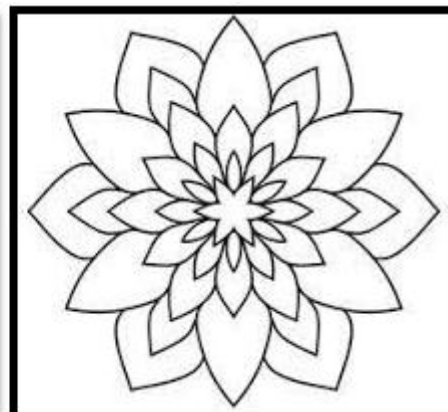
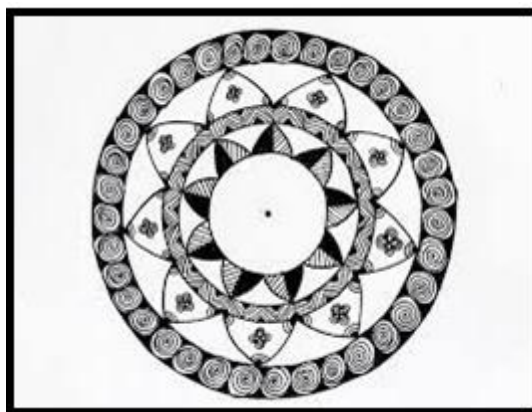
~ C. G. Jung.

The concept mandala represents "circle" in Sanskrit. In every culture, circles are a significant symbol. Halos, prayer wheels, and other religious symbols, as well as architecture and nature, all have them. Mandalas are holy circles utilized in Hinduism and Buddhism in India and Tibet for meditation. Mandalas have also been incorporated into the

spiritual rituals of many other religions, including Christianity and Taoism. Mandalas can take the form of sketches or paintings. They could well be impermanent works, such as sand mandalas, which are frequently ceremoniously disassembled once they have been completed.

Mandalas can also be utilized as a tool for meditation and healing. Meditation has been demonstrated to help people deal with anxiety, depression, pain, and high blood pressure. It may also help to strengthen the immune system and encourage the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps to promote sleep and prevent cell ageing. While the exact influence of visual mandalas is unknown, they may prove to be a beneficial tool for meditative practice. Mandalas are not merely for decoration or meditation. Mandalas are incredible instruments for reducing anxiety. It has become increasingly recognized and understood that mandala coloring is a relaxing experience that calms racing thoughts, comforts neurochemical activity in the brain, and calms the body's physiological level of stress.

Carl Jung's Mandala work is an important source of information and exemplifies the significance of mandalas in Western civilization. Carl Jung believed that mandalas were a representation of one's collective unconscious, which is different from Sigmund Freud's understanding of the subconscious and unconscious. He referred to the mandala as a "self-archetype, " and its application in Jungian Play Therapy has been established. Mandala art therapy is an art therapy practise that has been utilised successfully in applied psychology. Mandala as a method for encoding humanity's experience as well as a mechanism for synchronisation, support, mending worries, and resolving anxiety states. Mandalas should be employed in difficult life situations, emotional stress, or crisis, according to Carl Jung. In the safe contained space of the Mandala, the image keeps power, thereby stabilising the emotional background, complex personal psychosomatic illnesses.



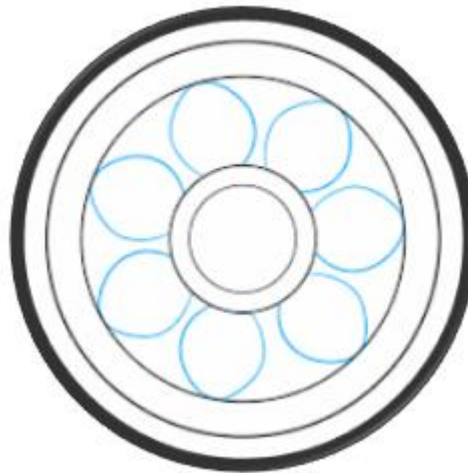


Figure 4: Different designs of Mandal

3. Literature Review

Victoria R. Bradford, The Ohio State University. Department of Psychology Honours Theses (2020), in the study Exploring the use of Mandala on Anxiety Reduction, gives an insight on how mandala making helps in reduction of anxiety for colouring and drawing, the method and materials used in this investigation was that the researcher use the following:

- 1) Momentary Anxiety and Heart Rate Readings: To understand the anxiety level through oral questions.
- 2) Mandala: The most important material to help understand will mandala help in managing and reducing anxiety.
- 3) The Ten-Item Personality Inventory: to understand the personality of the participants.
- 4) The State Trait Inventory of Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety: To assess cognitive and somatic anxiety.
- 5) Assessment of Colour Blindness: To see if the participants were colour blind or not.
- 6) Demographic questions: to collect general information.

The investigation was done from the age range of 13-22-year-old participants, they were asked questions regarding general information as well as questions on how they felt before and after doing the mandala.

The study gave insight that it did help individual on reducing stress.

Ms Sheth Ashmi, St Andrew's College (2019) Efficacy of Mandala Creation on Anxiety, Mood and Self-Healing, the study was done on 40 undergraduate students at St Andrew's College, Participants' anxiety and mood states were assessed using the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (Form Y-1) and the Profile of Mood States Abbreviated Questionnaire, respectively. The participants received sheets with printed circular outlines and wax crayons and directed to create a free painting within the circular outline of the mandala after creating a negative mood by directing them to identify three unpleasant occurrences currently on their minds. The STAI and POMS were given at three different times: before the negative mood induction task, after the negative mood induction task, and after the art activity. After the art activity, the subjects were informed a Self-Healing

Questionnaire to assist them examine their inner experiences and cognitive processes, as well as if they wanted to continue using art as a self-healing tool. The findings support the idea that drawing a mandala decreases anxiety and improves happiness in young adults. The data also suggest that young people can use mandala making as a self-healing strategy. According to the findings of the study, creating a mandala can dramatically reduce state-related anxiety levels in young adults as measured by the STAI. Prior to the art activity, the negative mood induction task ensured the presence of a substantially negative mood.

Annemarie Abbing, Erik W. Baars, Leo de Sonnevill, Anne S. Ponstein and Hanna Swaab (29 May 2019), in the study, The Effectiveness of Art Therapy for Anxiety in Adult Women: A Randomized Controlled Trial, gives an insight in how Art Therapy (AT) is commonly used in clinical practice to alleviate anxiety, but empirical proof for its effectiveness is limited because this intervention has been examined so little. The goal was to see if AT could help adult women with anxiety. Anthroposophical AT was just the type of AT that was investigated. The study was done on women between the age group of 18–65 years, diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder or panic disorder, with moderate to severe anxiety symptoms. Through the study it was found that Art Therapy has helped in reduction and management of their anxiety between 10-25 sessions (3-month trial).

Utaş Akhan, L., & Atasoy, N. (2017), in the study, Impact of Marbling Art Therapy Activities on The Anxiety Levels of Psychiatric Patients, the goal of the review was to see how marbling art therapy affected the anxiety levels of patients with schizophrenia and bipolar illness.

The researchers collected data from 34 patients diagnosed with schizophrenia and 34 individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorder who were treated at a university hospital and a state hospital's psychiatric service, polyclinic. A study group and a control group were used in the research. In the conclusion, the methodology of marbling therapy improved the positively and negatively symptoms of schizophrenia patients, and it also helped to lower anxiety levels in both patient groups.

Kiersten Anderson (2017) Effects of Colouring Mandalas on State Anxiety Reduction with a Focus on Big-Five Personality Traits, the study was done on 105 participants and had to colour mandala for 30 minutes as well as given the personality test to understand how the participant felt and understand their levels of personality during the task, this way the researcher also investigates how mandala making reduces anxiety during the task. The mandalas were of different difficulty level "Easy", "Medium" and "Hard", and through this the study on both personality and anxiety was done, different participants had different results but at the conclusion it was proven that mandala making helped in relaxing and reducing anxiety for the participants.

4. Conclusion

"Public art and having quality art in the workplace are about more than just having pretty pictures on the wall; it can be a form of self-help." -**Michelle Dean**.

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." -**Pablo Picasso**.

"Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time." -**Thomas Merton**.

For years, experts have been interested in the relationship between creativity and mental problems. Mental illnesses have a significant impact on the creativity and expression of those who suffer from them. Many well-known artists have struggled with mental diseases like depression, anxiety, mania, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and so on. Some of the world's greatest famous paintings, literature, and other works depict these illnesses and their consequences.

Anxiety is a widespread mental health disorder that affects millions around the world. Discovering convenient and easy solutions to control our anxiety is critical to preserving our physical and mental health. A few of the finest ways to do something like this could be to connect with art. Anxiety affects all. It is merely a human response to perceiving and reacting to danger in its original environment. Anxiety can be beneficial in short bursts. They can encourage us to complete tasks and perhaps inspire us to be more creative. Painters like Vincent Van Gogh who once quoted, "I am seeking. I am striving. I am in it with all my heart.", were said to have been battled with severe anxiety. During his time in an asylum, Vincent was diagnosed with a major anxiety disorder, among other mental and physical health issues. He also penned letters to pals about his "anxiety episodes". Just like Van Gogh, many artists such as painters, dancers, singers, etc. have expressed their anxiety through their work as a way of expressing and a way of letting out their frustrations, stress, anger through a canvas or any platforms.

There are many research and individual experience which has helped a person to cover their anxiety.

As for linking art with anxiety, art play a therapeutic role for an individual with anxiety, for some art can be the reason for someone to feel calm and not feel the pressure of

overwhelming feeling of negative thoughts and work as self help for them.

5. Acknowledgement

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6. Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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