ART THERAPY WITH STUDENTS AT RISK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stella A. Stepney received her B.A. degree in Art Therapy from St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, New York. She received her M.S. degree in Art Therapy from Nazareth College in Rochester, New York. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 "Award For Excellence in Art Therapy" from Nazareth College. This accolade is awarded to one student from the graduating art therapy class who has demonstrated the highest caliber for delivery of clinical services as well as academic performance. During the 1999-2000 school year, Ms. Stepney researched, planned, organized, developed, and implemented an art therapy program designed to meet the needs of at-risk students referred to the Alternative Education Department at the Monroe #1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in Fairport, New York. The opportunity to design and implement an art therapy program into an alternative learning environment for adolescents laid the foundational framework for her Master's thesis. She has guest lectured in the Graduate Art Therapy Program at Nazareth College on the topic "From Thesis to Publication: Art Therapy with Students At Risk." Ms. Stepney has ten years of professional work experience in the field of Human Resources. She has teaching experience in the area of Early Childhood Education. She has designed and conducted museum tours for school-age children. A member of the American Art Therapy Association, Inc., the American Counseling Association, the Rochester Area Group Psychotherapy Society, Inc., and the Reclaiming Youth Collaborative of Rochester, Ms. Stepney resides with her husband, Harold, in Fairport, New York. They have an adult son, Terence.

ART THERAPY WITH STUDENTS AT RISK

Introducing Art Therapy into an Alternative Learning Environment for Adolescents

By

STELLA A. STEPNEY, M.S.

With a Foreword by

Ellen G. Horovitz, PH.D., A.T.R., B.C.

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". . . To Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine according to His power that is within us . . ."
Ephesians 3:20
NIV
and
To my husband, Harold, and my son, Terence
for your
love, support, and encouragement.

FOREWORD

Risk taking is a theme that courses through this treatise. Stella Stepney sprinkles doses of clinical acumen into this work while simultaneously offering the reader sound direction for setting up an art therapy program in an alternative high school setting. The manner in which Ms. Stepney has tackled this vast subject is both comprehensive and groundbreaking. The text covers historical and developmental overviews of art therapy programs in educational settings and outlines implementation of alternative programs, which encompass art therapy. But more importantly, Ms. Stepney covers this material in a most far-reaching manner.

Primarily, this opus begins by taking into account the physical, cognitive, moral, social, emotional, and creative development of an adolescent. Establishing this vantagepoint sets the groundwork for this sojourn. As well, Ms. Stepney's admirable compilation of these normative, developmental materials into user-friendly tables enables the viewer to look at this information contemporaneously with psychopathology as gleaned from the DSM IV-R classifications. This in itself is an extremely helpful tool in enabling the reader to organize this material into a useful platform for comparative understanding. Moreover, Ms. Stepney incorporates a glossary of psychopathic moods and affects and compares this information with developmental norms, which make these tables not only understandable but also extremely functional. The arrangement of such complex information is readily codified via Ms. Stepney's methodology and translates into discernable, usable order. This compartmentalization is a gold mine for anyone who has attempted to translate the complexities of the DSM IV-R into practical operation. But that's just the beginning.

The book then delves into everything a reader would need from establishing a rationale for instituting art therapy into an alternative school environment to types of diagnostic information to be correlated. Ms. Stepney does this with great aplomb while definitively reviewing theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and assessment

batteries from a variety of sources. While these are then translated into art therapy techniques, Ms. Stepney tailors the aforementioned directives and modifies previous researchers' ideas with ideas of her own. This is done rather meticulously and is then introduced into case vignettes so that the reader can witness firsthand how such contemplation could be configured into such an alternative educational environment.

Ms. Stepney seems to have thought of everything from IDEA '97 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to partnering successfully within an educational environment and establishing the most comprehensive release form I have seen designed to date. No stone was left unturned in this complete referendum. Anyone who wants to bring art therapy to the schools must have this compendium. It is a must. Art Therapy and Art Education have been dually wedded in this incredible weave. May the tapestry unfold as art therapists forge into this educational domain, weave together the tattered threads of an alternative existence, and minister these underserved youth into health.

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PREFACE

At the beginning of the twentieth century, education reformers made eloquent pleas for the education of the "whole" child–the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and creative components. Since students are educated by means of the environment in the twenty-first century, special consideration must be given to the design of both traditional and nontraditional learning environments.

Adolescents who are referred to alternative learning environments are considered to be students who are at risk with the potential for displaying academic, behavioral, and social problems. Academically at-risk students fail to achieve and are predictably dropout prone. Behaviorally at-risk students display inappropriate school behaviors. Socially at-risk students are faced with disciplinary charges and may have been brought to the attention of the juvenile justice system. Researchers have isolated factors that describe the attitudes and personality characteristics of students who are at risk. These factors include defensiveness and hopelessness, attention-seeking, antisocial disorders, conduct disorders, interpersonal problems, and family relationship problems.

Researchers suggest that professionals designing alternative education programs should consider both the at-risk factors and the attitudes and personality characteristics of students in order to develop effective interventions. They recommend that effective school programs should include intensive individual and group counseling focusing on self-esteem, self-concept, personal responsibility, and the appropriate expression of feelings. Students who are at risk must be convinced of their own self-worth and be able to foresee the consequences of the choices they make.

Art therapy, in an educational setting, is a psychoeducational therapeutic intervention that focuses upon art media as primary expressive and communicative channels. The art therapy process allows students to explore personal problems and potentials and find ways of making responsible choices.

Research points out that many students currently placed in alternative school programs would qualify for special educational services following psychological evaluation. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Public Law 94-142, in its original form, identified art therapy as a viable service that could benefit a student who required special education. Public Law 94-142 made it possible for school systems to allocate monies to help fund art therapy. However, it should be noted that students who are not identified as disabled but who experience difficulty in school as a result of academic, behavioral, and social problems could also benefit from art therapy.

This book represents the research, planning, organization, development, and implementation of an art therapy program into an alternative learning environment. It is designed for graduate art therapy students, professional art therapists, educators, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and individuals interested in the application of art therapy.

The book is divided into six chapters. Unique to this resource is the inclusion of 14 art therapy techniques, written using a lesson plan format, that have proven to bridge not only the verbal and nonverbal, but also the logical and emotional. Photographic illustrations highlight the students' creative responses to the techniques.

Chapter 1, *Adolescence*, examines the developmental period of adolescence. The physical, cognitive, moral, social, emotional, and creative components are discussed. This period is characterized by challenges. From a developmental perspective, disordered behavior is viewed as a developmental deviation. Precursors of later disorders are looked for within the challenges that are most notable. If development is amiss in these critical areas, there is the potential for further problems.

Chapter 2, *Alternative Schools*, traces the evolution of the alternative schools movement from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s to the present. Mary Anne Raywid is recognized as a leading contemporary advocate for alternative schools. Raywid emphasizes that from their inception, alternative schools have been designed to "respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program." Consequently, alternative schools have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environment. The three "pure" types of alternative schools are highlighted.

Chapter 3, *Alternative Education Programs*, explores the dual catalysts for policymakers to embrace alternative education. These catalysts are the desire to increase graduation rates and the need to eliminate disruptive or violent students from the classroom without sending them into the streets. The Alternative Education Department of Monroe #1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in Fairport, New York was officially formed in July of 1998. This department, under the administration of David R. Halpern, is a progressive alternative learning environment that possesses the characteristics of innovation, autonomy, and empowerment that have contributed to the overall success of the students referred to the programs.

Chapter 4, *Emotions and Learning*, provides insight into the psychobiology of emotion and its impact on learning. Developments in the cognitive sciences have uncovered how and where the body and brain process emotion. Since emotion can be a more powerful determinant of behavior than the brain's logical or rational processes, researchers recommend that educators should develop a basic understanding of the psychobiology of emotion to enable them to evaluate emerging educational applications.

Chapter 5, *Art Therapy in the Schools*, focuses on the field of school art therapy. Janet Bush is a leading advocate for this specialization within the art therapy profession. Bush raises the question, "Will art therapy eventually be well established in all school systems and will it serve as one accepted means of addressing student failure in the classroom?" She highlights the variety of tasks that must be accomplished to make art therapy an integral part of the educational program.

Chapter 6, *Implementation of the Art Therapy Program*, presents an effective proposal for the introduction and implementation of a viable art therapy program within an alternative learning environment.

It is my hope that this book will provide practitioners with valuable insights into this unique population of students and offer intervention strategies that will lead students at risk to creative self-expression and ultimately into cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

STELLA A. STEPNEY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Inspiration is defined as the stimulation of the mind or emotion to a high level of feeling or activity. Individuals who inspire stimulate creativity or action in others. During my inspirational journey, many sincere, dedicated, and committed individuals have inspired me. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the educators, practitioners, mentors, role models, students, friends, and family who, in their own unique way, have enabled me to make this contribution to the field of Art Therapy.

I am deeply indebted to Sister Elizabeth Slinker, OP, A.T.R. and Carol Greiff Lagstein, C.S.W., A.T.R., B.C., Director of Art Therapy, for introducing me to the profession. My undergraduate work at St. Thomas Aquinas College provided me with an understanding of the creative art therapies and how the creative process can be a pathway to greater self-awareness and self-healing.

I am appreciative of the opportunity to obtain my Master's degree from Nazareth College. I want to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Ellen G. Horovitz, A.T.R., B.C., Director of the Graduate Art Therapy Program. As an educator, Dr. Horovitz has contributed her professional knowledge, expertise, and clinical experience. As a mentor, she challenges students to enhance their therapeutic work by delving deeper into their own personal issues and exploring them fully. Dr. Horovitz has provided me with invaluable support and encouragement in reinforcing my professional capabilities. To Dr. Horovitz, Victoria Laneri, A.T.R., Sandra Ticen, A.T.R., and the Graduate Art Therapy staff at Nazareth College, thank you for providing the highest level of professional training and development that is required for art therapy students to become skilled practitioners.

I want to acknowledge and thank David R. Halpern, principal of the Alternative Education Department of Monroe #1 BOCES, for his recognition of the value of art therapy in the lives of students who are at risk. The situations, experiences, and data obtained through the introduction and implementation of the art therapy program laid the

foundational framework that supports this book. To David Halpern, Dr. Tom Cascini, and the Alternative Education Department staff, thank you for your assistance and encouragement in this endeavor. Special thanks are extended to the students and their families for permitting me to include the photographic illustrations of the artwork.

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I have been blessed with a loving and supportive family. To my aunt, Bertha Douglas, a steadfast woman of faith, thank you for role modeling graciousness, dignity, and charm under all circumstances.

To my husband, Harold, thank you for continually being the "wind beneath my wings."

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint."
Isaiah 40:31
KJV

INTRODUCTION

Image-making, as a vehicle for creative self-expression or giving vent in constructive form to feelings, emotions, and thoughts at one's own level, enables us to understand and to learn. Through the process, our consciousness of the self, others, and the environment is enhanced. Carl Jung theorized that there are four functions of consciousness: sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking. Sensation and intuition are the two functions by which "facts" and the "fact-world" is apprehended. Feeling and thinking are the two functions that judge and evaluate. In other words, we experience our world through sensation and intuition; we judge and evaluate our world through thinking and feeling. Jung (1971) explains:

> The only things we experience immediately are the contents of consciousness. . . . Consciousness seems to stream into us from outside in the form of sense perceptions. We see, hear, taste, touch, and smell the world, and so we are conscious of the world. Sense perceptions tell us that something is. But sense perceptions do not tell us what it is. . . . What it is, is told to us by the process of apperception. . . . This recognition derives from the process of thinking. Thinking tells us what a thing is. . . . The recognized image arouses emotional reactions of a pleasant or unpleasant nature, and the memory-images thus stimulated bring with them concomitant emotional phenomena which are known as feeling-tones. In this way, an object appears to us as pleasant, desirable, and beautiful, or as unpleasant, disgusting and ugly. This process is called feeling. The intuitive process is conceived as perception of the possibilities inherent in a situation. (pp. 23–26)

One definition for image is a mental picture of something not real or present. Images, as mental pictures, are universal phenomena. They are occurrences or facts that are perceptible by the senses; so they belong to the function of sensation. We experience images or mental pictures with feeling-tones, through dreams, music, poetry, and encountering scents. Therefore, image-making is the process of giving form to mental pictures with feeling-tones.

Creative power is one of the definitions for imagination. Pat Allen

(1995) explains:

> Our imagination is the most important faculty we possess. . . . It is through our imagination that we discern possibilities and options. A relationship with our imagination is a relationship with our deepest self. Whether we have cultivated our imagination or not, we each have a lifetime of patterns and habits of thought embedded there based on past experiences. Our expectations of ourselves and the world flow from these patterns. (p. 3)

Imagination, as creative power must be "cultivated." Creative power must be formed and refined in order to gain insight into possibilities and options. Jung (1971) points out, "It is the function of the conscious not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality, the world within us" (p. 46).

This "world within us" can be translated into "visible reality" through the processes inherent in drawing, painting, and sculpture. We make visible our kinetic energy through drawing. We make visible our sensual energy through painting. We make visible our emotional energy through color. We make visible the three-dimensional and instinctual components of our experiences through sculpture.

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand
In the doing is the learning
(Ancient Chinese Proverb)

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CONTENTS

ART THERAPY WITH STUDENTS AT RISK

Chapter 1

ADOLESCENCE

DEVELOPMENT IS DEFINED as the process of orderly, cumulative, directional, age-related changes in a person. Pathology is defined as any marked deviation from a normal, healthy state. Developmental psychopathology is the study of developmental challenges and vulnerabilities of healthy and unhealthy psychological adaptations and of the complex influences that determine developmental outcomes. Studying psychopathology, from a developmental perspective, views disordered behavior as a developmental deviation. Therefore, we must look for the precursors of later disorders within the cognitive, social, and emotional challenges that are most notable at a given age. If development is amiss in these critical areas, there is the potential for future problems.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence is the period of growth from puberty to maturity, age 12–19 years. It is a transition period that has always been characterized by challenges. With respect to physical development, a stepped-up production of sex hormones late in middle childhood brings about the beginning of adolescence or puberty. Puberty is the period during which a child changes from a sexually immature individual to one who is capable of reproduction. Sexual maturation is accompanied by the development of secondary sex characteristics. These are noticeable transformations, which differentiate males from females but are not essential to reproduction.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Jean Piaget (1896–1980), a Swiss biologist and pioneer in the field of developmental psychology argued that there are major qualitative changes in the way children understand and learn about the world. In Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the emphasis is on the qualitative changes (transformations) in the way children think through a series of stages in which cognition becomes less egocentric and experiential and more analytical.

There are three major cognitive advances in adolescence. Logical thinking is now applied to the possible (what might exist), not just to the real (what does exist–concrete thinking). The use of Hypothetico-Deductive Reasoning allows an adolescent to think-up hypothetical solutions to a problem (ideas about what might be) and then formulate a logical and systematic plan for deducing which of these possible solutions is the right one. In situations that require thinking about possible consequences of various courses of action, hypothetico-deductive reasoning is also useful. The ability to think about relationships among mentally constructed concepts is a cognitive advance. These are the abstract concepts built up from the more concrete things adolescents perceive.

In general, adolescents are able to reflect on the thought processes through which they gain knowledge. They are now able to think about thinking. They also have a more mature grasp of abstract concepts such as identity, justice, religion, society, existence, morality, and friendship. Piaget (1972) viewed the new thinking skills of adolescents as the product of new kinds of mental transformations. He labeled these qualitative changes Formal Operations.

Another change related to cognitive development is Adolescent Egocentrism. Egocentrism is the failure to differentiate the perspective of others from one's own point of view. Since adolescents are now able to think about their own thinking and consider abstract possibilities, they develop a new kind of egocentrism. David Elkind (1967), in describing adolescent egocentrism, stresses the concepts of Imaginary Audience and Personal Fables. An Imaginary Audience is a manifestation of adolescent egocentrism in which the young person displays an unjustified belief that he or she is the focus of other people's attention. Because adolescents can think about the thoughts of others, they are able to consider what others might be thinking of them. A Personal Fable is a manifestation of adolescent egocentrism in which the young person believes in his or her uniqueness to the point where he or she thinks that

no one else has ever had his or her special thoughts and feelings.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Moral Reasoning is the process of thinking and making judgments about the right course of action in a given situation. Piaget (1932, 1965) included the development of moral reasoning within his theory of cognitive development. Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1969) developed a six-stage model of how moral reasoning changes. In Kohlberg's stage theory, most adolescents reach the period of Conventional Morality (stages 3 & 4) in which their moral judgments are based on internalized standards arising from concrete experiences in the social world. Kohlberg calls the reasoning conventional because it focuses either on the opinions of others or formal laws. In Stage 3, referred to as the "Good-Boy, Good-Girl Orientation," the young person's goal is to act in ways in which others will approve of. Actions are motivated by a fear of either actual or hypothetical disapproval than by a fear of punishment. In Stage 4, referred to as "Authority, or Law-and-Order Orientation," the basis of moral judgments shifts to concern over doing one's duty as prescribed by society's laws. Concerns about possible dishonor or concrete harm to others replace concerns about other's disapproval.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The developmental stage theories postulated by Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson address the social and emotional development in adolescence. Freud developed the theory that abnormal behavior results from the inadequate expression of drives or intense urges based on human biology. According to Freud's (1966) early theory, there is only one motive that governs behavior. This motive is the satisfaction of biological needs, which in turn discharges tension. The critical component is the amount of gratification or frustration that the child experiences as he or she seeks to discharge this tension. Freud's stages of psychosexual development are defined in terms of the primary body organ used to discharge tension at each particular period of development. Faulty development can occur because of frustration at a particular psychosexual stage. This frustration can result in fixation. Fixation is the failure to progress normally through the psychosexual stages of