

Abstract

# Application of Art Therapy with People Who Have Experienced Psychotrauma

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This paper will present three art therapy activities used in working with people who have experienced trauma. During trauma, the prefrontal cortex is not functional, so trauma experiences are mostly stored as sensory information that is often difficult to translate into verbal form, which is why talking to a traumatized person is a real problem. A non-invasive approach is provided precisely by art therapy, as it enables gradual access to the traumatic experience – verbalization follows expression in art materials. Given that the trauma is stored in the body and in the form of scenes, the alternation of non-verbal and verbal parts of the art therapy session allows the client to gradually present the experienced scenes and stories. Externalizing traumatic content has a beneficial effect, it gives the possibility of separation and distancing from the experience, and once the experience is presented, it becomes material that can be reinterpreted from another point of view.

Labyrinth, diorama and identification of parts of self activities were highlighted in the presentation, to present the possibility of working through trauma as part of the art therapy process on the examples of two clients of different ages and with different traumatic experiences. The activities were created according to individual therapeutic goals and for the needs of the respective clients, and their implementation resulted in a therapeutic shift.

Three isolated examples will provide insight into the layering of art therapy as a form of psychotherapy that combines creative artistic expression with verbal expression. Through this kind of elaboration of artistic expression, cognitive insights and awareness are reached, which makes this approach extremely suitable for working with people who have experienced trauma.

**Keywords:** art therapy, psychotherapy, self

Sažetak

## Primjena art terapije s osobama koje su proživjele psihotraumu

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U izlaganju će biti predstavljene tri art-terapijske aktivnosti upotrijebljene u radu s osobama koje su proživjele traumu. Tijekom traume prefrontalni korteks nije funkcionalan pa se iskustva traume uglavnom pohranjuju kao senzorne informacije koje se često teško prevode u verbalno, zbog čega razgovor traumatiziranoj osobi pričinja istinski problem. Neinvazivni pristup pruža upravo art terapija jer omogućuje postupno dopiranje do traumatičnog iskustva - verbalizacija slijedi nakon izražavanja u likovnim materijalima. S obzirom da je trauma pohranjena u tijelu i u obliku prizora, izmjena neverbalnih i verbalnih dijelova art-terapijske seanse omogućuje klijentu postupno iznošenje proživljenih prizora i priče. Eksternaliziranje traumatskih sadržaja djeluje blagotvorno, daje mogućnost odvajanja i distanciranja od iskustva, a jednom iznijeto iskustvo tada postaje materijal koji se može ponovno tumačiti s drugoga stajališta.

U izlaganju su izdvojene aktivnosti labirinta, diorame i identifikacije dijelova Selfa, s ciljem predstavljanja mogućnosti prorade traume u sklopu art-terapijskoga procesa na primjerima dvaju klijentica različite dobi i s različitim traumatskim iskustvima. Aktivnosti su kreirane prema individualnim terapijskim ciljevima i za potrebe dotičnih klijentica, a njihovim se provođenjem ostvario terapijski pomak.

Tri izdvojena primjera pružit će uvid u slojevitost art-terapije kao oblika psihoterapije koji kombinira kreativni likovni izraz s verbalnim. Kroz ovakvu proradu likovne ekspresije dolazi se do kognitivnih uvida i osvještavanja, što ovaj pristup čini iznimno prikladnim u radu s osobama koje su proživjele traumu.

**Ključne riječi:** art-terapija, psihoterapija, self