



## Art Based Therapy in Special Education

HITESH PATEL

(Student of P.G.D.R.P.)

B.M. Institute of Mental Health, Ahmedabad.

Gujarat (India)

### Abstract:

*Special Children are those children who have been determined to require special attention and specific necessities that other children do not. Special education is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students' individual differences and needs. Recently it has been found that there has been a great increase in the number of special children. There are several therapies used for the treatment of the special children and one of them is Art therapy. Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others cope with symptoms, stress and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art. Art therapy, no matter what type of disability a child has, was found to be an effective tool to incorporate in a program. The artwork of children under art therapy has found to increase in detail throughout the duration of the program, suggesting that the child's individual abilities are increasing and providing ways for a child to cope with their disability. Special Education involves many students, as well as those who are placed into it even after being under general education for years. It can be inferred that something lacks within these children and the use of focused attention and creativity involved with art therapy can increase the possibility of long-term success in life. Building communication skills, self-awareness, balancing emotions and ego strengths has also been found in children who were under art therapy.*

---

**Keywords:** *ABT, Special Children, Special education*

---

### 1. Introduction

As medication is important for physical diseases, in the same way therapy is important for those who are differently able. There are various types of therapies that are used for the people with special needs such as Occupational therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech therapy, psychotherapy, Art therapy etc. These therapies are useful to lessen their impairment of a person to compete in the world. An Art Based Therapy (ABT) is one such therapy that that develops skills even in normal people. ABT also gives a highly positive result when used for people with special needs and even Mental Illness. Here we have emphasized more towards the use of Art Based Therapy for children with Intellectual deficiency (Mental Retardation).

### 2. Definition of Key Terms

#### 2.1 Special Children

Special Children are those children who have been determined to require special attention and specific necessities that other children do not

#### 2.2 Special Education

Special education is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students' individual differences and needs.

### 2.3 Therapy

Therapy literally means "curing, healing" and is the attempted remediation of a health problem, usually following a diagnosis.

### 2.4 Art Based Therapy

Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development.

### 3. Need of Therapies for special child

- To increase their work ability
- To increase their perceptual motor skills (eye-hand co-ordination)
- To make them self dependent
- To increase their level of speech and communication
- To develop their domestic and social abilities
- To develop their Reading and Writing skills
- To develop their Pre – Vocational skills
- To bring positive changes in the level of the Activities of Daily Living (ADL)

### 4. What is an Art Based Therapy?

Art therapy, sometimes called expressive art or art psychology, encourages self-discovery and emotional growth. It is a two-part process, involving both the creation of art and the discovery of its meaning. Rooted in **Sigmund Freud** and **Carl Jung**'s theories of the subconscious and unconscious, art therapy is based on the premise that visual symbols and images are the most accessible and natural form of communication to the human experience. Patients are encouraged to visualize, and then create, the thoughts and emotions that they can't express verbally. The resulting artwork is then reviewed, and its meaning interpreted by the patient. The analysis of the artwork typically enables a patient to gain some level of insight into their feelings and allows them to work through these issues in a constructive manner. Art therapy is typically practiced in conjunction with individual, group, or family psychotherapy (or verbal therapy). While a therapist may provide critical guidance for these activities, an important feature of effective talk therapy is that the patient/artist, not the therapist, directs the interpretation of their artwork. Some **Mental Health** professionals also view art therapy as an effective diagnostic tool for the identification of specific types of **Mental illness** or traumatic events. In the late 19th century, French psychiatrists Ambrose Tardieu and Paul-Max Simon both published studies on the visual characteristics of and symbolism in the artwork of the mentally ill. They found that there were recurring themes and visual elements in the drawings of patients with specific types of mental illness. More recently, psychiatric literature has explored common themes and symbols in the artwork of **sexual abuse** survivors and victims of trauma.

### 5. Importance of Art Based Therapy

1. **Self-discovery.** At its most successful, art therapy triggers a sense of relief and wellbeing through the recognition and acknowledgement of subconscious feelings.
2. **Personal fulfilment.** The creation of a tangible reward can build confidence and nurture feelings of self-worth. Personal fulfilment comes from both the creative and the analytical components of the process.
3. **Empowerment.** Art therapy can help individuals visually express emotions and fears that they were never able to articulate through conventional means, and give them some sense of control over these feelings.
4. **Relaxation and stress relief.** Chronic stress can be harmful to both mind and body. It can weaken and damage the immune system, cause insomnia and depression, and trigger a host of

circulatory problems. When used alone or in combination with other relaxation techniques such as guided imagery, art therapy can be a potent stress reliever.

5. **Symptom relief and physical rehabilitation.** Art therapy can also help individuals cope with pain and promote physiological healing by identifying and working through anger and resentment issues and other emotional stresses.

## 6. Application of Art Based Therapy

Art therapy can be a particularly useful treatment tool for children, who often have limited language and communications skills, social skills. By drawing or visually expressing their feelings, even if they can't identify or label the emotions, younger patients have a starting point from which to address these issues. Art therapy is also valuable for adolescents and adults who are unable or unwilling to verbalize thoughts and feelings.

Beyond its use in mental health treatment, art therapy is also employed as an adjunct (or complementary) therapy to traditional medicine for the treatment of biological diseases and conditions. The correlation between mental health and physical health is well documented. Art therapy has been used in the healing process to relieve stress and develop coping mechanisms, in an effort to treat both the physical and mental needs of the patient. Although art therapy is traditionally centered on visual mediums (paintings, sculptures, drawings, etc.), some mental healthcare providers have broadened the definition to include music, film, dance, writing, and other artistic genres too.

## 7. Results of the researches done on Art Based Therapy

Swetha veeraghavan, Dr. Vivek chincholkar (2012) designed a study to see the effect of ABT on autistic child. They used VSMS Scale for see the different & ABT for two month. They found in post testing or result there are significant positive change in socialization and communication of children with Autism. Kearns, D. (2004). Designed a study to see effect of Art therapy with a child experiencing sensory integration difficulty. Result shows that increase in positive behaviours after art sessions as well as postponement of the first incidence of negative behaviours. Art therapy was found to be a useful intervention.

## 8. Concussion

Art Based Therapy is joyful therapy condition to improve or positive change in psychological or medically ill person. Application of art based therapy is also easy for trained therapist and also shows positive change in both mental and physical health. Past study or experiment is also shows effectiveness of Art Based Therapy.

## Reference

1. Kearns, D. (2004). Art therapy with a child experiencing sensory integration difficulty. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 21(2), 95-101.
2. Reddy, G. Lokanandha (2007), *Encyclopaedia of Special Education*, Vol. VII, Mental Retardation, New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.
3. Richard, S. Sharf (2002). *Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling*, Thomson Learning.
4. Trevaethen Clwyn, *Autism, Sympathy of movies and music therapy*, *Enface*, 2002/1 Vol. 54.
5. Veeraraghavan, Swetha and Vivek Chincholkar (2012). "The unfinished Painting"- An Art Based Therapy approach as an early intervention module for children with autism, *Abstract Book*, National Conference on "Early intervention of Developmental Disabilities: NIMH Secundrabad.
6. World Center for Creative Learning Foundation (2009). *Subtle Energy Guide*, Pune: Prime Enterprise.