

THERAPEUTIC Artistry



Anubha Doshi



Devika Sekhar



Varun Venkit

ART FORMS AS THERAPIES HAVE BEEN SLOWLY GAINING POPULARITY IN PUNE. *CITADEL* FINDS OUT MORE ABOUT THESE **ART-BASED THERAPIES.**

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Since ages, man has been making use of varied therapies that have been available to him. Today, the different types of therapies offered have only become more numerous. And one such therapy is art-based therapy, which has slowly and steadily been gaining importance in recent years. In the West, art-based therapies have already gotten the recognition they deserve; in India though, they are still gaining acceptance. Not many people know about these therapies yet. An art-based therapy is defined as the clinical and evidence-based use of art forms, such as music, drama, and visual arts, to accomplish individualised goals within a therapeutic relationship. In other words, this therapy encourages people to express and understand emotions through artistic expression and a creative process. Art-based therapy is also known as creative arts therapy or expressive arts therapy. In our very own city, there are many options for art-based therapy such as Original Movement Therapy (OMT) by Devika Sekhar, Taal Inc drum circles by Varun Venkit and Rainbow Inc art therapy, and a few others.

Anubha Doshi, Pune head of Rainbow Inc art therapy and a clinical psychologist and art-based therapist, says, "Rooted in Freud's and Jung's theories of the subconscious and unconscious, art therapy is based on the assumption that visual symbols and images are the most accessible and natural form of communication to the human experience. Patients are encouraged to visualise and then create the thoughts and emotions that they cannot talk about." Art-based therapy is not just used in mental health treatment, but also with traditional medicines to treat organic diseases and conditions. The analysis of the art work, maybe a drawing or any other art form, thus allows a patient to gain some level



Rainbow Inc. art therapy workshop

of insight into his/ her feelings, letting one work over the issues in a positive way. Art-based therapy is normally practiced with an individual, group or family psychotherapy (talk therapy).

Devika Sekhar, a trained worker in Dance Movement Psychotherapy, throws light on Original Movement Therapy (OMT). She says, "Coming from the origin, coming from within, our bodies cannot lie. They are a mirror of the soul of emotions and memory. If we become aware, a movement reveals who we are, what we feel and think, and how we can cope with events, experiences and life." She later adds that this therapy is also a means for those unable to speak, or for people who are dealing with clinical issues that are hidden within the subconscious, beyond the reach of language.

Be it drum circles or movement or music, any art form has its own therapeutic effect. Varun Venkit, founder of Taal Inc and a clinical psychologist, percussionist, drummer and master NLP

(neuro-linguistic programming) practitioner, says, "A therapeutic process is all about coming together, interacting with each other, being here, and repetitive form. Therapeutic setting of drumming is in a drum circle; there is neither an audience nor a performance. Therapeutic elements are hidden in such drum circles. A drum circle brings people together. Every person in a drum circle faces one another. There is no hierarchy, everyone expresses oneself; there's a certain energy that's created. Moreover, a 20 per cent unspoken therapy always exists even if people play drums just as an activity." The facilitator in the centre of a drum circle plays a key role. He draws an invisible energy graph for the circle; he equips each participant as much as possible and makes each participant aware. Thus, a drum circle helps to heighten sense modalities, brings your ego out, helps you understand your strengths and shows deeper personalities.

All the different art forms that comprise art-based therapy have their own manner of therapeutic sessions. These sessions maybe with an individual, group or family.

In OMT, the therapist works alongside the person to help the person express himself. To add to it, body mapping has also been introduced.

In a drum circle, a group of people, sitting in a circle play drums. Anything that makes sound—djembe, conga, bongo, wood blocks, dafli, dhol, tasha, shakers, or any other junk like empty containers are used. If there's a facilitator, he will introduce the instrument, emphasise on techniques and simple rhythm using games. Gradually, as a group rhythm evolves, he will focus more on non-musical goals.

Dance therapy consists of movements like warm-ups, trust exercises, body rhythms, etc, which are therapeutic and fun. Likewise, the atmosphere of a play or drama enables people to connect directly; attitudes change and people connect as they open their hearts to new friendships. People thus look forward in a spirit of collaboration and conciliation.



Drum Circle

Music therapist Juliet Alvin (1975) contended that the music therapist and music therapy setting are especially conducive to ensuring that the client is deriving pleasure from the experience. The music therapy setting makes possible for the client the freedom to behave in certain ways such as, by making noise, shouting, banging the instrument; and freedom from fear, threatening stimuli, etc.

Visual art therapy is a psychological discipline that specialises in making use of visual art making and the creative process to help people bring about therapeutic change. The main reason behind using this is, painting exercises mostly involve the right side of the brain, and prevent the more logical left side of the brain from dominating. Painting is effective for issues that require flexible thinking and intuitive solutions, and for finding a way out of a vicious circle.

Venkit explains, "Art-based therapies help people uncover the hidden potential in them. This should be understood on a policy level. All the art-based therapies should be put together." All art-based therapies prove beneficial for both children and adults. Any individual who wants to discover self can go in for such therapies. These therapies also prove helpful for corporate persons, alcohol and drug addicts, mentally and physically challenged individuals, orphans, autistic children, and children of commercial sex workers, persons with communication disorders, sensory impairments,



Original Movement Therapy session

Benefits of Art-Based Therapy

- Self-discovery
- Personal fulfilment: it comes from both the creative and the analytical components of the artistic process
- Empowerment: helps people express emotions and fears they cannot express through conventional means; thus giving them a sense of control over such feelings
- Relaxation and stress relief
- Symptom relief and physical rehabilitation
- Build's on a person's self-esteem, confidence and communication skills
- Developing a greater awareness of oneself in relation to others
- Corporate perspective: no hierarchy, team building, etc



Rainbow Inc. art therapy workshop



Original Movement Therapy session

developmental disabilities, interpersonal problems, behavioural issues, and such others. These therapies are also useful in situations such as grief, loss, trauma like sexual abuse, etc.

The goals for each therapy session may vary as per the individual's need, or the group's. These therapies revolve around different facets like the physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic and spiritual. These therapies bring about a constructive change in a person, covering various aspects, which are as follows: build self-esteem, confidence; learn to be creative and imaginative; increase attention span; enhance emotional-physical unity, cognition and physical functioning; become aware of ourselves, facilitate personal growth, delve into truths about self; explore and

transcend unhealthy patterns of interaction; stimulation and release of one's feelings; reduction of anxiety; experience of joy; expression of the major emotional states such as anger, fear, joy and calm, and so many others.

Devika Sekhar says, "Awareness about such therapies is important. Any individual can undergo these therapies. It's not necessary that something has to be wrong with an individual. Such therapies are also for figuring out things about you. Also, I feel all art-based therapies are interconnected." The art-based therapy sessions can either last for an hour, or for months and years together. It depends from person to person.

When asked how the response to art-based therapies has been in the country, Venkit quips, "Drum circles for therapeutic purposes have had slow progress. It takes a lot of work, time and commitment. It's a challenge. It's certainly happening in pockets across the country. But it's slow. Over the next seven years, it should be amazing." People are definitely showing a positive nod to such therapies. But there's still a long way to go before art-based therapies could become widely acknowledged. Devika Sekhar says, "The general public is certainly opening up more now than they used to before. Maybe that is because of the media bringing about different and creative careers with the use of dance."

Art-based therapies, regardless of how popular they already are, certainly do sound to be gaining a stronghold in the minds of many. It's just a matter of time and these therapies will become equally important in the field of health and remedy. Don't wait anymore; just go discover yourself! ◀