

Creative Arts and Expressive Arts Synthesis Reflection

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

As a doctoral student in the Counselor, Education, and Supervision program, I am constantly researching ways to improve in the field. The Association for Creativity in Counseling (ACC) creates a path for creative, innovative, and diverse counseling (Duffey et al., 2009; Gladding, 2020). Professionals in the mental health field can benefit from the Creative and Expressive Arts (CEA) with individuals and couples. This paper will reflect the impressions of my interaction, participation, and practice with the CEA class, modalities, techniques, and interventions, including the exercise activities with a pseudo-client, and my biblical worldview of CEA.

Keywords: *Creative Arts, Movement Therapy, counseling, supervision, sensory*

Creative Art Therapy

Appendix I

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Pablo Picasso, a famous artist in the early twentieth century, stated, “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life” (Picasso). Picasso describes art as a cleanser of the soul; one can infer that art is a window to connect with the self. CEA allows individuals to become self-aware and insight orientated towards feelings and emotions with the outcome of behavior modification that create the client's well-being. CEA is found to be a complementary asset with an empirical base research modality for the well-being of clients (Rohricht, 2009; Taylor & Siegesmund, 2017). The paper will allow me to reflect on the CEA content and meaning, biblical worldviews, and the application of CEA (Movement Therapy) with a pseudo-client.

When Talk Therapy is not enough, counselors incorporate the body and senses to facilitate emotional awareness of the content, meaning, and process for the client's wellness (Digges & Davis, 2018). CEA is a purposeful use of movement, imagery, performance, and imagination (Digges & Davis, 2018). CEA is a pathway to decreasing presenting problems in therapy through the expressions of visual arts, music/sound, dance and movement, imagery, drama, humor, play, psychodrama, animal-assisted therapy, and horticultural, nature, and wilderness therapies (Gladding, 2020). CEA facilitates awareness of one's inner self, reality, and world. I am currently a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) looking for ways to improve interventions and techniques with clients. In doing so, I combine Imago Couples Therapy (ICT) and Movement Therapy (MT) to help achieve goals for couples.

Movement Therapy

The evidence-based practices of MT strongly influence the counseling profession (Digges & Davis, 2018). Motion and movement connect during MT; the therapist can utilize expressive approaches of action movement with body and non-verbal expression. The techniques for MT include sensation, posture, rhythm, movement, synchrony, and familiarity with sensory integration (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). Ongoing research has supported the results of movement in our bodies as it relates to adverse life events, with posture and facial expression decreasing feel-good chemicals in the brain (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). Studies have highlighted the benefit of movement to increase healing, such as smiling, stretching, and extending the body objects that evoke a specific movement (Fuchs & Koch, 2014). Because of the phenomenon of wellness found in the movement, I desire to combine IT for couple's therapy.

Imago Therapy

During IT for couples, each partner repeats what the other is saying for clarification which is a technique utilized to improve communication and intimacy. IT is about the consciousness of images, imprinting of what love is (Luquet, 2006). Clients discover their attachments, styles, needs, and how these affect further relationships. IT has a technique of mirroring your spouse while listening, empathy, and becoming present for your partner (Hendrix, 2007). Also, Imago, moves clients from a negative psychological space to enter the partner's psychological space with curiosity and wonder. When practicing the techniques for IT, the neurochemistry of the couple changes by releasing endorphins and oxytocin, which help couples communicate and bring trust and romance (Hendrix & Hunt, 2021). Imago helps couples transform their marriage from differences to validation and security.

Imago with Movement in Creative and Expressive Arts

Appendix I demonstrates the “*Imago with Movement in Creative and Expressive Arts*” (IMCEA). IMCEA is a technique which I am currently researching, I was inspired by the wonderful works of Movement Therapy and Imago Therapy modality. The activity is suited for couples who experience communication, distress tolerance in emotional regulation, and attachment issues. The goal is to help couples decrease their reactivity to negative emotions and increase dopamine and endorphins to elevate their mood in the presence of their spouse (Hendrix & Hunt, 2021). MT is included because movement will convey curiosity and proximity to extinguish negative arousal (Hendrix, 2007). The modality is primarily mindful movement with imago principles.

First, the therapist will ask a couple with a gentle voice to please sit in front of each other and hold hands. Second, the therapist will invite each participant to look at each other in the eyes while being silent. Third, the therapist will invite the clients to mirror each other’s facial expressions and body movements without saying a word. Couples are encouraged to do whatever comes to mind. The therapist will ask the couple to switch every other minute. After the couple spends several minutes with the exercise, the therapist will thank the client for participating. Finally, the time to process the activity and become aware of their feelings. During this moment, the therapist will ask the couple several open-ended questions. For example: what feeling came to mind when doing the exercise. What was meaningful about the exercise? What was the hardest part of the exercise? What did you learn during the exercise? How can this exercise help your relationship? What did you learn about your partner?

I enjoy practicing IMCEA in couple’s therapy. It is a multicultural technique that gives space for couples to communicate without words. In my experience, couples are very tense because they are uncomfortable with each other’s emotions, and they cannot begin a

conversation, evidenced by their facial expressions, body tension, and breathing. Couples become aroused quickly and cannot talk but rather yell, scream, and point fingers at each other. IMCEA does not involve the words but rather couples use Imago mirroring techniques with movements, there are no words. Often, this is the first-time couples look at themselves in the eyes which makes them communicate and vulnerable. I personally have witnessed couples laugh, cry, and become silly with body movement. Couples feel good, they experience the warm emotions that they felt when they met, becoming hopeful about the future of their relationship. Now therapist and couple can begin discussing uncomfortable feelings because couples have opened unconsciously during IMCEA.

Creative Arts Course Journey

The CEA class was very insightful to me. For starters, I learned how to utilize CEA techniques in my counseling practice. At this moment, I expanded my knowledge in exploring interventions and techniques with CEA. I enjoy drawing in class and reflecting on the activities. I also enjoyed Daniel's presentation of the dance movement; it was a renewing experience. The psychodrama video presentation captivated my attention; I realized how much pain clients have and how much we can guide the journey of healing for our clients. One of my fun things in CEA class was the electronic stand tray; it is an excellent tool for online therapy.

The journals were another way to express my reflections on the readings while applying some of the material. CEA can be used for supervision (Degges & Davis, 2018). CEA in supervision was interesting because I like kinetic and sense learning when teaching and supervising. I plan to utilize CEA with the supervision models with my supervisees. CEA allows me to create a space for curiously observing, listening, and learning about someone's wellness journey. I can reflect and process the clients' experiences with open-ended questions, empathy,

and a non-judgmental demeanor. CEA is multicultural because is really about the artist (the client) and the way his story is portray in his CEA. I love to discover the pathway to recovery with clients. CEA allows me to help clients interpret their creative and expressive art.

Biblical Perspective of Creative Art Therapy

I see CEA in a special way because God was the Creative in His creation of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1-2 KJV). In the church communities, there is much CEA. I thought that CEA was done for children and youth interests, but it is also for multicultural and diverse infusion. CEA, in my opinion, is interwoven in the sacred practices of faith in the church community. CEA is a way to worship, fellowship, and participate in faith practices. The church is filled with CEA. A sermon is a CEA to tell the story of hope and the gospel of the Word. This involves writing and speaking. Worship is also CEA because it involves singing, meditating, dancing, poetry, and prayer. Most of what people do in church has CEA because religion and spirituality are experienced differently.

The meta-narrative of the story of God to His people is a field with CEA. Scripture contains symbols, parables, fallacies, poems, and worship songs. It was the storytellers whom the Word of the Creator God inspired. God spoke life into existence, beginning a storyline that restores hope and helps heal humankind. Furthermore, in the old testimony, God showed himself to the people with signs and symbols. An example of signs and symbols is in the book where the story of King Nabuchodonosor, found in Daniel 5, where there are signs on the wall.

Jesus was often found teaching, preaching, and performing miracles. He preached and thought with parables and signs. We can see Jesus becoming creative in the Last Supper, utilizing the feet washing as a symbol of servanthood (John 13:2-17 KJV). Also, in the same supper, Jesus utilizes the bread and the wine to teach about the fellowship and unity of the

church (Mathew 26:17-30 KJV; Luke 22:7-20 KJV). Also, Jesus performed miracles in more ways than speaking; an example is healing the blind men and taking mud from the floor to place in the blind man's eyes (John 9:6 KJV).

Lastly, the works of the Holy Spirit transform and restore humankind. The Holy Spirit is here to guide and comfort us most uniquely and creatively (John 14:26 KJV). The Holy Spirit works from within us. I feel truly blessed to be a messenger of hope towards salvation. Also, I bring grace, love, and kindness to my clients to help them overcome mental health and life transitions with the integration of CEA.

Conclusion

CEA modalities are a beneficial approach to help individuals, couples, and groups gain equilibrium in life. Movement with integration of Imago modality helps couples connect and communicate more effectively. The experiences that the CEA class has given me will forever be treasured. I see CEA manifest in the creative actions of the Holy Trinity as God the Father is the creator, putting creation into order and existence, Jesus the Son, the wisdom of God who was there at the moment of creation, and finally, the Holy Spirit the active force through whom creation came to be.

CEA has enriched my professional career. Furthermore, it has given me a more extensive toolbox of intervention to help clients, supervisees, and students as an emerging Counseling, Education, and Supervision doctoral student.

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