



Creative Therapy



Information Leaflet
for professionals

Why is Creative Therapy Helpful?

The teenage years can be rough for young people, especially those who have mental health issues and other difficulties that prevent them from expressing themselves in a positive or healthy manner.

Creative therapies can engage young people by capturing both their developmental needs and level of independence to address a variety of things in therapy. Some young people struggle to put their anxiety, depression or other experiences into words. Often problems that young people face are too painful or complicated to put into words. Creative therapy provides an alternative means of communicating for those who cannot find the words to express their pain, anxiety, trauma, physical abuse, loss, depression, social difficulties and other health conditions.

Creative therapy can be described as the unique ability to unlock emotional expression by facilitating non-verbal communication through creativity. In order to give each young person a recovery that is best suited for them, the therapy is bespoke and designed uniquely around each individual's needs. Creative therapy can be anything - noisy, messy, sticky, disorganised and/or colourful. But so, can the difficulties that young people struggle with on a day-to-day basis.



What is Creative Therapy?

Creative therapy, refers to the use of a variety of creative methods as a way of encouraging young people to communicate difficult feelings and thoughts. Creative therapy can take on many different forms and uses a wide range of mediums to match the young person's interests.

The flexibility of Creative therapy tends to be effective for young people, as each person may connect to, and/or benefit from, a different approach. Some mediums used in Creative therapy include:

- Paint – oil pastels, poster paint
- Paper – construction paper, tissue paper, newsprint
- Drawing materials – colored pencils, ink pens, felt-tip pens, markers, crayons, etc.
- Collaging materials – old magazines, textured materials, fabrics
- Movement or dance
- Music or story-telling



Why use Creative Therapy - How can it Help?

As a type of expressive therapy, Creative therapy works very well with young people with a range of challenges because it is:

- Non-threatening with less of a direct focus on the young person
- A safe outlet for expressing what they are feeling inside
- A process over which the young person feels a sense of control
- A way to discover underlying thoughts and feelings
- Develops a strong relationship with the therapist

For some young people, the medium of creativity is a better language to communicate than talking directly about their difficulties. It therefore appeals to many young people as it provides a way to externalize their inner world when they might not have the words to do so in other ways. This makes it an attractive type of therapy for young people, so they are more likely to continue to participate with the process until the natural ending occurs. The process of working with the materials to create a final product or express themselves helps many troubled young people gain self-understanding, learn better coping methods and work through problems.

Creative therapy can therefore benefit young people by:

- Helping explore current struggles and associated feelings
- Enhancing self-awareness
- Increasing self-esteem
- Assisting in problem solving
- Relieving symptoms of stress, depression, and anxiety

What Happens in Creative Therapy?

In Creative therapy sessions, a young person is facilitated to use different materials or ways of expression to develop a certain idea.

For example, young people may create:

- A portrait of how they think others see them
- Paint what their sadness feels like
- A photo collage about their feelings from magazine clippings
- Make a mask that helps them feel more secure when talking about their problems
- Tell a story about their interests
- Sing, move or dance how their emotions make them feel

A young person does not need to have any creative or artistic talent to benefit from this approach, as the therapist can/will guide them where needed. The therapist does not interpret their final product. It is up to the young person to share and talk about whatever information they choose. In this type of specialized therapy, the focus is on the process of creating and not on the final product. Creating is the primary initial focus, increased self-understanding, self-actualisation and agency will often come later.



How Creative Therapy Works in Schools and other Organisations

Creative therapy generally follows a standard procedure.

This usually includes:

1. Referral from parent/ guardian or educational/ other professional;
2. Consultation with parent(s)/ guardian(s);
3. Liaison with school/ organisation
4. If consent, information gathering with professionals;
5. Block of Creative therapy including;
 - An initial 50minute meeting with parent(s)/ guardian(s);
 - A block of 12 individual 50minute Creative therapy sessions with the young person (some young people will require more than 12 therapy sessions in total);
 - A mid-way and final parent/ guardian meeting;
 - Additional meetings or contact with parent(s)/ guardian(s) and/or professionals to gather information or pass on strategies for home and/or school as required;
 - Mid and/or final written report, if requested.

It is important to note that ending Creative therapy needs to be done sensitively over several weeks. Premature or unplanned endings are detrimental to the young person. This is why professionals and parents/ guardians need to be involved in the Creative therapy process in order to review the young person's process.

The Five 'C's of Creative therapy

It is important for professionals to be familiar with the five "C's" of Creative therapy:

Confidentiality: Creative therapy has to be private to allow the young person to feel safe enough to express and explore difficult and painful experiences. Safeguarding policies are always adhered to.

Consistency: Creative therapy takes place at the same time, in the same space each week. It is important that no changes in consistency occur, even if the young person has been disruptive or difficult in school/ organisation or for a member of staff.

Commitment: The therapist, professionals and parents/ guardians need to be committed to helping the young person. This requires patience, trust and dedication to the young person and the Creative therapy process.

Consent: Before Creative therapy can start, the parent/carer (or the person holding legal responsibility for the young person) must give written consent for Creative therapy. The young person must also give verbal assent prior to starting and throughout the process.

Child Protection: The Therapist adheres to organisational child protection procedures.





Horizon Play Therapy



British Association of Play Therapists
Registration Number: 1396



Howden Insurance