



Creative Therapy



Parent & Guardian
Information Leaflet

About Creative Therapy?

The teenage years can be rough for young people. Young people who have difficulties that prevent them from expressing themselves in a positive or healthy manner can find it particularly hard. Creative therapy is counselling or psychotherapy for teenagers and young people, usually aged over 12 years. Creative therapy can help young people to express their emotions without the need to talk. This means that it can provide a different way of communicating for those young people who cannot find the words to express their difficulty, anxiety, pain or feelings. Some young people are able to tell their parents and teachers what is troubling them but may find it hard to understand their troubles and some young people feel unable to talk about their worries. Creative therapy can help teenagers to explore their feelings or emotions through the use of creativity and other methods.

In Creative therapy the therapist does not tell the young person what they need to make, do or what to say. The therapist does not interpret the meaning of the young person's creation. Creative therapy encourages communication and trust. It allows the teenager to express themselves and their feelings. Creative therapy works by exploring a young person's feelings and emotions. It can relieve stress and allow the young person opportunity for self-discovery. Once a young person begins to learn and develop coping skills they are then able to understand their difficulties and other issues.



Who and How can Creative Therapy help?

Creative therapy is an effective early-intervention for teenagers and young people with various life experiences including:

- abuse, neglect or those that have been traumatised
- the experience of loss through bereavement, family breakdown or separation
- illness, disability or caring for someone with an illness
- siblings with disabilities
- witnessed violence or abuse
- emotional or behavioural difficulties (e.g. depression and/or aggression)

The process of working with the materials and creating a final product helps troubled young people gain self-understanding, learn better coping methods and work through problems. Creative therapy can therefore benefit young people by:

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

Creative therapy can be used for many problems that teenagers face. However, Horizon Play Therapy is not suitable for young people that are currently experiencing trauma and/or those at risk of immediate harm. Support from other services should be sought.



What is Creative Therapy and Why Does it Work?

Creative therapy refers to the use of a variety of creative means as a way of encouraging young people to communicate difficult feelings and thoughts. Some young people may choose not to use the creative materials but instead prefer to talk or may use other methods to express themselves.

Materials that may be used in creative therapy include:

- Paint – oil pastels, poster paint
- Paper – construction paper, tissue paper, newsprint
- Collaging materials – old magazines, textured materials, fabrics
- Singing, Music, Dance and Story-telling

As a type of expressive therapy, creative therapy works very well with some young people because it is:

- Non-threatening with less of a direct focus on the individual talking about themselves
- A safe outlet for expressing what they are feeling inside
- A process over which the young person feels a sense of control
- The sessions can be both interesting and creative
- A way to discover underlying thoughts and feelings
- Easier to develop a strong relationship with the therapist

For some young people, having freedom and the opportunity to be creative in a therapy environment is a better language to communicate than talking alone.

What Can You as the Parent/Guardian do to Help?

- Resist the urge to ask the young person what they did in Creative therapy, as this will put pressure on them to comment on something, they may have difficulty understanding. It may also mean they may make up something to please you.
- Please don't ask the young person to 'be good' or check they have been. Therapy is not about being 'good' or 'bad' and they must feel free to express themselves in an anyway.
- Creative therapy can be messy, to minimise their and your anxiety about this, it is helpful if the young person can wear clothes that are OK to get messy.
- If your young person asks you to inform the therapist about something it is important to pass this message onto the therapist.
- During any therapeutic intervention behaviour may appear to get worse before it gets better – please let the therapist know if you have any concerns. Please also feel free to get in touch with the therapist and ask any questions you might have throughout the process. Creative therapy can often become a journey for the family as well as for the young person.



Is Creative Therapy Confidential?

Confidentiality is important in therapy; this is because it is similar to an adult going to see a counsellor. An adult would not want their partner, family or work colleagues knowing what they have said in therapy. A young person may also not want people knowing what they have done or said either. However, as a parent/guardian you may want to know what your teenager has done or said in therapy. If your teenager wants to talk to you about therapy then that is perfectly fine.

The therapist will meet with you at regular intervals to discuss progress in therapy sessions and any changes and developments you have witnessed or experienced at home or at school. The therapist will not discuss specific details of what the young person has created or said in the sessions. This is important in order to maintain the young person's trust and feelings of safety with the therapist and the process of therapy.

Information that you share about the young person and family will usually be kept confidential. The therapist may share information with other colleagues and professionals for the benefit of the young person if needed and with your and their permission. A therapist must share information with other professionals if they are concerned that an individual is being harmed, hurting others or themselves. The therapist will usually talk to the young person and/or you about this first depending on the circumstances of the situation or risks.



What does Creative Therapy include?

Creative therapy generally follows a standard procedure, which includes:

1. Referral from parent/guardian, school or other professional
2. Referral discussion and liaison
3. If suitable, Creative therapy intervention will usually involve:
 - An initial 50minute meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - An introductory individual 50minute Creative therapy session with the young person to introduce and start the process
 - A block of 10 individual 50minute Creative therapy sessions with the young person (some young people will require more than 12 therapy sessions in total)
 - A mid-way parent/guardian meeting, as required
 - Meeting(s) with teaching staff/ other professionals, if relevant or necessary
 - A final 50minute individual Creative therapy session
 - A final 50minute parent/guardian meeting
 - Some families find that they benefit from meeting more often with the therapist and this can be a crucial part of the journey - additional meetings or contact with parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or professionals can be arranged to discuss 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 parents/guardians and professionals need to be involved in the Creative therapy process in order to review the teenagers progress within Creative therapy and beyond.



Horizon Play Therapy



British Association of Play Therapists
Registration Number: 1396



Howden Insurance