

Benefits for Elders of a Person-centered Approach to Expressive Arts



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Foundations of The Creative Connection

- Dr. Carl Rogers, a psychologist, developed the person-centered therapeutic approach based on humanistic values and methods, believing that every person can become self-actualized in a safe, empathic, non-judgmental environment



- Dr. Natalie Rogers integrated the values and methods of her father with her interests in expressive arts and creativity



Use of Expressive Arts

- Can be used in groups with many different purposes:
 - ❖ conflict resolution
 - ❖ physical healing
 - ❖ programs for fostering creativity, personal growth and spiritual awakening
 - ❖ business seminars
 - ❖ organizational development
 - ❖ team-building
- No artistic experience is necessary



Evolution of The Creative Connection

- Natalie Rogers was influenced both by her father, an eminent psychologist, and her mother, an artist, who encouraged her to paint, draw and sculpt
- She and her father began working together when they developed a 10-day intensive large-group summer workshop in the 1970s, to which she added a creative arts dimension
- She came to believe that using movement, visual art (e.g., painting, collage, clay), sound (e.g., music) and journal writing in sequence, with minimal verbalization, led participants to use all their senses to uncover deep emotions, gain new insights and experience personal growth
- This was the beginning of the evolution of the Creative Connection method for stimulating social as well as personal change



Natalie Rogers

- Psychologist, group facilitator, artist, and expressive arts therapist
- Has done cross-cultural work in many countries in Europe, South America and the Far East
- Established training programs in Argentina, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong
- A consulting faculty member at Saybrook University in San Francisco
 - Private, non-profit institution for humanistic studies offering graduate degrees in psychology, mind-body medicine, organizational systems and human science
 - Offers a specialization as well as a certificate in Creativity Studies in its Psychology and Interdisciplinary Inquiry area of study



Natalie Rogers



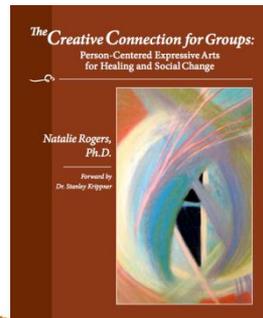
- Founded the Person-Centered Expressive Therapy Institute (PCETI) in Santa Rosa, Calif., in 1984
 - ❖ Person-centered approach to counseling blended with humanistic principles of expressive art therapy
 - ❖ Human impulse toward self-actualization equated with creativity
- PCETI has evolved into Person-Centered Expressive Arts Associates, offering individual workshops and training supervision (www.nrogers.com)



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Books by Natalie Rogers

- *The Creative Connection: Expressive Arts as Healing* (1993) focused on incorporating the expressive arts in individual psychotherapy using the client-centered psychotherapeutic approach
- *The Creative Connection for Groups: Person-centered Expressive Arts for Healing and Social Change* (2011) is meant to enhance groups whose participants are working toward transformation, healing and social action to deal with personal, community and global challenges



← Source material for this presentation



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The Creative Connection

- By fostering creativity within oneself and others, enables self-healing in the proper environment
- Empowers participants to live more authentic, effective lives
- Transcends ethnic, religious and national boundaries in search of common ground
- Person-Centered Expressive Arts Principles:
<http://www.nrogers.com/principles.html>



The Creative Connection Format

- Links expressive arts in sequence to facilitate self-revelation and self-expression
 - Moving with awareness
 - Sounding and singing, listening to music
 - Expressing feelings in color, line or form
 - Writing/Journaling (and/or poetry) to process experiences with other art forms
 - “...one expressive art form awakens the creative energy of another.” (p. 6)
- Connections between different creative art forms promote self- and group development through the expressive arts, encompassing all of the arts



The Creative Connection Group

- Group sessions focus on encountering oneself (rather than one another) through the arts, with the support of a group
- Words and verbal sharing are important but not always necessary in this context
- Building on Dr. Carl Rogers' belief that all human beings have a tendency to realize their full potential, for a group to move in a constructive direction, its atmosphere must be one of acceptance and trust, allowing members to show aspects of themselves that are usually hidden (e.g., removing their social masks)
- Group facilitator must exhibit genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy, as well as structure and explorations to stimulate creativity
- Also important that the facilitator not be judgmental when participants experiment with and explore expressive arts media



The Creative Connection Experience

- The point of making art and movement in this context is not mastery, but about expressing feelings
- A permissive and accepting atmosphere allows participants to find their creative and authentic selves
- Awareness of the body enables integration of mind, body, emotions and spirit, while listening to the physical self



Person-Centered Expressive Arts Guidelines

- Be aware of your feelings as a source for creative expression
- There is not right or wrong way to do art. We create art to discover our inner essence.
- Be aware of your own body, and take care of yourself.
- All instructions are *always* suggestions. You have the option not to do them. Be your own boss here.
- These experiences stir up many feelings. You may need to cry or let out loud sounds, which can be very helpful.
- If you choose to be an observer, notice group dynamics or enjoy the experience vicariously. Please do not judge others.
- The events in this course should be kept confidential.



Applications of Person-centered Expressive Arts Group Facilitation

Examples of adaptations for incorporating healing and transformation using expressive arts in professional work with groups of elders

- Anin Utigaard: Benefits of Creative Expression
- Maria Gonzalez-Blue: Painting with Scarves



Anin Utigaard, MFT, REAT

(Registered Expressive Arts Therapist)

- A founding co-chair of IEATA (International Expressive Arts Therapy Association) and a former faculty member of PCETI
- Experience includes combining psychology and expressive arts therapy for healing



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Therapeutic Programs for Elders Diagnosed with Dementia in Assisted Living

- Expressive arts are powerful for those who are challenged by verbal language, allowing them to communicate instead by means of creative expression--
 - The brain can more easily and immediately access body gestures, sounding, drumming and color on a page
- In combination with a person-centered approach, the creative process enables connections with elders who have various forms of “forgetfulness”



Benefits for Elders of Expressive Arts Combined with a Person-centered Approach

- Less agitation, anxiety, depression, medication
- Increased physical movement, socializing, quality of life
- Means to review one's life



Examples of Other Benefits of Creativity:

Decreased Isolation

- Music, art, drama, painting, sand tray, storytelling, poetry, collage, and drumming are all tools for communicating with others, counteracting feelings of isolation and abandonment
- Elders experience contentment in a safe, accepting environment where they can share a creative connection with others



Examples of Other Benefits:

Dealing with Shame and the Inner Critic

- Creative offerings such as collage, or listening to poetry or music, support freedom of expression and resistance to one's inner critic
- Listening to music may inspire elders to sing along and/or dance, providing an expressive outlet and an opportunity to be heard and seen
- Puppet theater used to enable elders to create a script or story with the characters, perhaps representing something from their life experiences or feelings



Examples of Other Benefits: Providing Stimulation--

Exercise, Connection and Release of Emotions

- Drumming allows elders to become part of the circle and the community, decreasing feelings of being isolated and alone, and offering life rhythm and energy in sound representing both the individual and the whole circle
- While providing exercise and stimulation, drumming can also elicit calm, knowing and connection to others



Examples of Other Benefits:

Decrease in Aggression and Frustration

- Expressive arts can be used to address challenging behaviors by providing an outlet for emotions, a way to be understood, and a way to release through movement, sound or drama
- Activities may range from hitting a balloon back and forth, to drumming, to wadding up paper and throwing it in a wastebasket



Examples of Other Benefits: Processing Feelings and Life Review

- Experiences in the last stage of life may include grief, confusion, fear, shame, life reflection, unfinished business, facing one's own mortality
- Through the arts process, these experiences may be expressed as color on a page, figurines selected in a sand tray, a story co-created with others, a collage, impromptu drama
- They empower elders to be seen, heard and understood



Maria Gonzalez-Blue, MA, REAT, REACE

(Registered Expressive Arts Consultant/Educator)

- Adjunct Professor of Expressive Art Therapy at the California Institute of Integral Studies and a former faculty member of PCETI
- Facilitates groups with elders, mostly women, in convalescent hospitals, board and care homes, a physical therapy rehab. clinic
 - Health issues include stroke, multiple sclerosis, dementia, Alzheimer's, post-surgical recovery



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Groups with Elders

- Most participants are widows residing in their last “home,” often an environment where they have little control
- Most are continually indoors or may have limited mobility, so attention is given to seasons, solstices and equinoxes to stay in touch with the outer world
- Creative outlets for expression provide excitement, stimulation, fun and healing for all; these may include art, music, singing, exercise/movement, storytelling
- Satisfaction comes from reminiscing about the past, reflecting on life issues, recalling joys and challenges, sharing experiences
- Enables participants to fulfill the need to be seen



Sample Activity:

Painting with Scarves

- Create an image as if painting with a collection of brightly colored scarves, e.g., gardens and flowers
- Since participants are usually in wheelchairs, they are invited to feel the fabric as a tactile experience; facilitator then creates a garden by placing the scarves on the floor in the center of a circle so everyone can see them
- Participants are asked what is needed to create a garden; scarves are used to paint earth, sun, water, fertilizer, rain



Sample Activity:

Painting with Scarves

- One group suggested a rose garden and colors for the roses, during which participants were asked to think of and sing songs about roses, e.g., *Yellow Rose of Texas*, *Red Roses for a Blue Lady*
- Invited to share gardening memories, asked to imagine entering the garden and to consider what they might feel or see there
- Comments are connected with a few words, and transformed into collective poetry



Poem Written Together: The Garden

We step in and first see the roses
Pink, yellow, red and Cecil Brunners – marbled pink and yellow
We see pansies of different colors, in pots or in the earth
Their faces look up at us

Violets surround us
White, purple, and pink
Hummingbirds visit the blooms
Sucking nectar

It's afternoon,
We sit and relax
With wine, lemonade, or sarsaparilla
And watch the four o'clocks open their pink faces



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Resources

International Expressive Arts Therapy Association
(IEATA; www.ieata.org)

- Founded in 1994 to encourage the creative spirit
- Members include therapists, artists, educators and others using integrative, multimodal arts processes for personal and community growth and transformation
- Expressive arts include visual arts, movement, drama, music, writing and other creative processes
- One of its key missions is to “increase the recognition and use of expressive arts as a powerful tool for psychological, physical and spiritual wellness”



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Resources

National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations

www.nccata.org

- Alliance of professional associations dedicated to the advancement of the arts as therapeutic modalities for ameliorating disability and illness and optimizing health and wellness.
 - American Art Therapy Association
 - American Dance Therapy Association
 - American Music Therapy Association
 - North American Drama Therapy Association
 - American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama
 - National Association for Poetry Therapy



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More Information and Hands-on Experience Today

Linda Elliott, PhD, LISW-S, ATR-BC, CNM, CPM, CSD, RMT
Adult Education Specialist
Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging

- Expressive Arts Conferences at Benjamin Rose
 - ❖ Wednesday, May 21, 2014; 8:30am – 5:00pm
 - ❖ Wednesday through Friday, October 22-24, 2014

Sarah G. Sieradzki, OTR/L, HTR, CDP
Clinical Specialist in mental health occupational therapy
University Hospitals, Case Medical Center

- Journaling with those attending today's program



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Questions?



Thank you.

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