

Expressive Art Therapy – Creative Movement/ Dance

RASA dance performance-DVD

Do you notice something different in this performance? Yes! The performers of course. They are special children. Children with varied disabilities – coordination problem, sequencing trouble and more. However here they are presenting a performance! The secret behind this is ‘Expressive art therapy’ which has transformed them and their lives.

Pics -Paintings, Instruments, dances,

Pics/videos Artistic Hobby time, hobby pursuits – pottery, glass-work etc

What is ‘Expressive art therapy’? Well needless to say it is some form of therapy which uses art. And what does the word ‘art’ bring to the mind? Music, dance, drama, painting etc. right? Many of us who have artistic hobbies or know others who have them will agree that art can be very relaxing and is also a very creative outlet of our individual self-expression.

Video RASA – sessions (story-telling, music)

In ‘Expressive art therapy’ specially challenged and other differently-abled people are introduced to art and are encouraged to find their self-expression in art, which they might find difficult otherwise. It is a form of therapy which is non-medical and yet proven to be highly effective. The basic premise being that art is a reflection of life hence individuals can be introduced to various aspects of life through art. For these individuals who often have trouble expressing themselves, art can become a medium for their self-expression.

Trying to sing for example might be easier than trying to talk for individuals with a speech problem. Dancing could be an interesting way to introduce and improve body balance, coordination for aiding those with such problems.

Video -Drama – LecDem RASA

Understanding and responding to 'real' situations, people and emotions can be assisted through 'drama therapy' – where understanding and learning happens through 'acting out' situations and responses! Music too as we are all aware of has therapeutic qualities, especially instrumental.

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These arts employed under the guidance of an expert can effectively be used as therapy for bringing productive changes. This is expressive art therapy. Art forms such as music, movement, drama and visual art have observable, effects on human brain functioning, on the subtle energies of the individual and these effects can be employed for therapeutic purposes. Benefits of bringing the arts to the individual and getting them to assimilate and respond, react and create their own artistic expressions eventually, has been scientifically proven.

Videos - Sivamani performance, Paintings, anupama
Kylash/Mangala,

Videos – folk dances, folk art

When we hear the word 'art' the images that come to the mind are perhaps a classical dance performance may be Zakhir Hussain's percussion concert, or perhaps Ajanta and Ellora paintings. While these are artistic works of professionals that have gained national and international fame, there is another side to art and artistic creations which often remains unnoticed. And that is individual or communal pursuits of art. These could be for purposes as varied as creative explorations, entertainment, rituals, communal activities etc.

PICS – Dance T, music T, saptaparini pottery, zubin- drums

Expressive art therapy is concerned with precisely this aspect of art and its immense possibilities for the individual. Expressive art therapy uses creative tools of artistic expression from music, movement, drama and visual arts to bring about therapeutic changes at various levels, be it

-physical rehabilitation, language and speech, memory, stimulus response, social behavior, immune system, emotional responses, psychological states and more.

Video - Regular dance classes – 1st steps/mangala

So while a regular art course would have a specific skill-level based syllabus, the focus in art **therapy** is neither on artistic-skill acquisition and performance nor is it on creating works of artistic excellence. Of course a performance or creation of a product could be an outcome of the sessions and could be furthered if desired. However it is not the 'end' but the 'means'

Video - RASA – THD

RASA, Chennai has touched the lives of many differently-abled children through THD. THD or Theatre for Holistic Development is based on the principle that all human beings have a natural sense of movement which can be tapped and channelized to help them explore and achieve their full potential.

THD uses dance, mime, music, drama, arts and crafts which make for a spontaneous and stimulating learning process. Besides being great fun, these activities are scientifically structured to achieve therapeutic goals.

Through this learning method which is non-threatening and fun, children become more aware of their minds and bodies and their capabilities. They learn self-help skills and feel empowered to do all they can do.

THD is also a wonderful methodology of rehabilitation.

Tripura's videos/ ****?

The focus completely shifts from the 'product' to the 'process'. This process of creative exploration is believed to bring about the positive changes. What really changes is 'how a person views his/her reality' and not actually the reality. Art forms such as music, movement, drama and visual art have observable effects on human brain functioning. These effects encourage and enable the individual to change their idea about their body, their feelings, their actions and their life! And consequently this gives a slightly higher percentage of control over themselves, their thoughts and actions and eventually helps them make improvements.

'Expressive art therapy' is all about employing these effects effectively for therapeutic purposes.

Pics(n google pics)- portrait with voice-over

Science too backed therapeutics effects of art through research findings. In 1992, **Carlson N.R. of Foundations of Physiological Psychology** said 'Any treatment that stimulates dopamine receptors in the nucleus accumbens will reinforce behavior'. The role of art in such a venture was stated in 1997 by **Dale. B. Taylor, PhD. MT-BC, of Biomedical Foundations of Music as Therapy**. In Dale's words "Art is **capable of stimulating** both dopamine producing neurons and dopamine receptor areas with impulses to cause reinforcement that is useful, observable and replicable"

Globe- West n India

Videos/images- ambika, madhu, tripura, zubin

While expressive art therapy has been around in the west for over 4 decades now, structured and systematic use of art therapy in India is still at its fledgling stages. Qualified art therapists are few and far between. The good news is that we do have dedicated individuals who are trained and mentored by reputed international therapists and institutions and have been doing commendable work in India in the field of art Therapy. Dr Ambika Kameshwar 'dance, drama, music- theatre for whollistic development' in Chennai, Tripura Kashyap creative movement therapist in Delhi, Zubin Balsara drum therapist, Anand Chabukswar drama therapist, Susan visual art therapis in Pune . Dance therapist 'Madhu Nataraj' in Bangalore.

RASA n Ambika – videos n pics Barbara

Dr Ambika Kameshwar is the director of RASA(Ramana Sunritya Aalaya) Chennai. At RASA one finds children with special needs enjoying their sessions of music, dance and drama under the guidance of their director Dr Ambika Kameshwar over the last 20 years. Ambika

has formulated and pioneered and teaches 'Theatre for holistic development'. She has worked with internationally renowned movement therapists such as Ms.Diana cooper - Movement Educator, London school of Speech and Drama - UK and Ms Barbara cortez Greig, Dance Therapist.

Parent picture (Rasa) pic n video (Autism centre S'puri)

Many stories are around of parents who are indebted to RASA for the tremendous development in their child. S. Krishnamurthy father of K. Mukundhaprasad says "My son K. Mukund was not in a position to talk, eat or do anything independently. He had no concentration at all. My wife and I had lost all hopes. This was my emotional state when I admitted my son K. Mukund in RASA in February 2000. To my surprise and joy Mukund had started showing tremendous improvement and today Mukund is able to eat independently , interact with others., take care of his daily needs. Mukund loves going to RASA. My gratitude to RASA.

Even in other places such as Hyd, parents vouch by the benefits of 'EAT". XYZ from 'Autism centre parents association Hyderabad' says "....."

Video- wheel-chair bound enjoying music, University, india dances

Tripura's interest in dance-therapy was triggered by observing her wheel-chair bound brother responding joyously to music. A series of coincidences in 1980, eventually led to Tripura studying Dance/movement Therapy at Hannock Center, in Wisconsin University, USA. By the end of her study Tripura gradually became aware that Indian physical traditions and movement practices offer a large canvas for dance therapy. On her return to India, she began her work in movement therapy in Bangalore.

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Excerpts of interview with Tripura Kashyap

"What is dance? A unique physical discipline in which emotional, pscycological, spiritual, intellectual and creative energies are unified and harmonized."

"Is there a goal in dance? Yes, dance prompts people to have a dialogue with their bodies. It nourishes the body in just the way reading or

meditation nurtures our mind. Dance liberates people's bodies and allows them to move in patterns outside the restrictions of their daily lives.

"Does dance work at an individual level? How would it help to dance in a group? While dancing alone could get you in touch with deeper emotional or spiritual aspects of oneself that we may be unaware of. Dancing in a group could push your collective energy beyond physical limits.

Videos n pics –American Ballet

Videos n pics – modern dance

The origin of Dance Therapy as we understand today can be traced back to early nineteenth century America. The then popular form of dance– Ballet was archaic and empty technical display of movement .This led to dissatisfaction and unfurled an exciting phase in the history of dance in America. Isadora Duncan and some of her contemporaries were pioneers of a movement that came to be known as 'modern dance' that inspired many to embrace its new principles and philosophy.

Video n pics- free dance forms, world war2, post-war depression

Marian Chace a performer and choreographer who had eventually branched into teaching American modern dance, found that her heterogeneous mix of students were often interested in learning dance for the sheer joy of it and not really for performing! She then began to experiment with dance movements, simplified them and evolved fresh teaching styles to cater to the needs of non-dancers. Marian Chace had thus laid the foundations of dance therapy. The Second World War in 1940's found Marian Chase and many other modern dancers working with psychiatric patients, researching and practicing dance therapy.

Association –images, Emblem, vision statement etc.

In 1966 these various dance therapy practitioners came together and formed the ADTA American dance therapists association, which is now spread across 46 countries with over 1500 dance therapists.

Pics n videos- Tripura, Ambika

Back in India has been dance/movement therapy has been successfully integrated at many rehabilitation & treatment centers, half-way home, hospitals, special schools and de-addiction centers in Bangalore and other cities.

Ambika- pics, lec dem videos, interview videos

****Ambika Dr. Ambika Kameshwar Ph.D, PDF, educationist, dancer and singer, choreographer and music composer is the founder Director of RASA – Ramana Sunritya Aalaya - a no profit organization started in the year 1989.**

Dr. Ambika Kameswar is the pioneer of the methodology “Theatre for Holistic Development” which uses the creative arts like Dance, Music, Drama, Story telling and Art and Craft as tools of learning.*Book

Tripura – website pics,

Tripura has conducted several training programs on dance therapy for special educators, teachers, and therapists all over India. She has and continues to present academic papers on dance therapy, dance in education, contemporary dance theatre at conferences and seminars.**Book

Dance therapy sessions are usually woven with elements of intuitive exploration

Videos- RASA, Tripura

****My write-up Participants are taken through activities and exercises from warm-ups, imitating, mirroring, and thematic creative visualization that aim to progressively build improved comfort levels with the body and its creative possibilities. All of this is attempted in a gentle, non-competitive, non-judgmental environment with the aim of making both movement and its creation enjoyable.**

Excerpts of interview with Tripura Kashyap

“Can you describe a regular dance therapy session? Each dance therapy session is unique as the session and the course is tailor-made

for the target group or individual by the facilitator. Typically one requires space which is free from disturbance for the session. Participants have creative movement based ice-breakers and warm-up activities and gradually progress to imitative and eventually improvisational activities”

“What kinds of activities are included? Activities come under varied ‘heads’ such as personal and spatial awareness, body coordination and control, relaxation and energizing, balance, rhythm, response to music, movement qualities, emotions, gestures, and improvised choreographies make up the core of the workshop.

For example I started a session asking the participants to come up with a movement statue for ‘what they are feeling today”

Videos from Tripura’s DVD, recording some sequences

Dance therapy also works for teachers, corporate team leaders alike. The possibilities are immense with every group. The sessions steer participants towards breaking away from conditioned body-images and habitual body postures and movements to explore new and varied creative movements/dance. The aim is to get participants to discover within themselves, non-verbal routes to build the body-mind connection and acquire new perceptions of their reality.

Images- websites WCCL, RASA, Rainbow

When it comes to expressive art therapy in India, the challenges are many – both individual and institutional. The challenges notwithstanding contemporary practitioners are committed to the cause of expressive art therapy in India. One such initiative is the World Centre for Creative Learning Foundation (WCCL FOUNDATION) a registered NGO established in Nov. 2001 by professionals in the field of the arts & human development, Zubin Balsara drum therapist, Anand Chabukswar drama therapist, Susan visual art therapist to name a few.

Images/videos ABT sessions

WCCL FOUNDATION collaborates with other NGOs to implement ABT (Art Becomes Therapy) in areas of psychosocial rehabilitation, special education, developmental disabilities, and neuro-physiological rehabilitation with a mission of broadening the practice, creating more practitioners and furthering research and development in expressive art therapy in India. *RASA -course

Video n pics – RASA children

In India these are new and small beginnings for a noble cause, yet the commitment and dedication is certainly going to help innumerable lives be invaluablely touched by expressive arts therapy.



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