



RCT
Zagreb



Integrative psychotherapy

Sandra Šipka – psychologist

Zdenka Pantić – psychologist, gestalt therapist

What Is Integrative Therapy?

- Based on psychodynamic, existentialist and humanistic approaches
- **Helps people express themselves artistically and examine the psychological and emotional undertones**
- **Uses creative media as the basic element of communication**
- Dialogue has the „triangle structure“: the client, the therapist and the art work. It is this „third“ **object (art work)** that opens **new options for the realisation of change, healing and relief**



Basic philosophical settings



- People are beings of relationships – focusing on the inner and outer contact as important for human functioning
- Respecting the inner value of every person
- Normalising functions of psychological processes
- Connecting to positive life changes
- Importance of individual development process
- Importance of therapeutic relationship

Goals



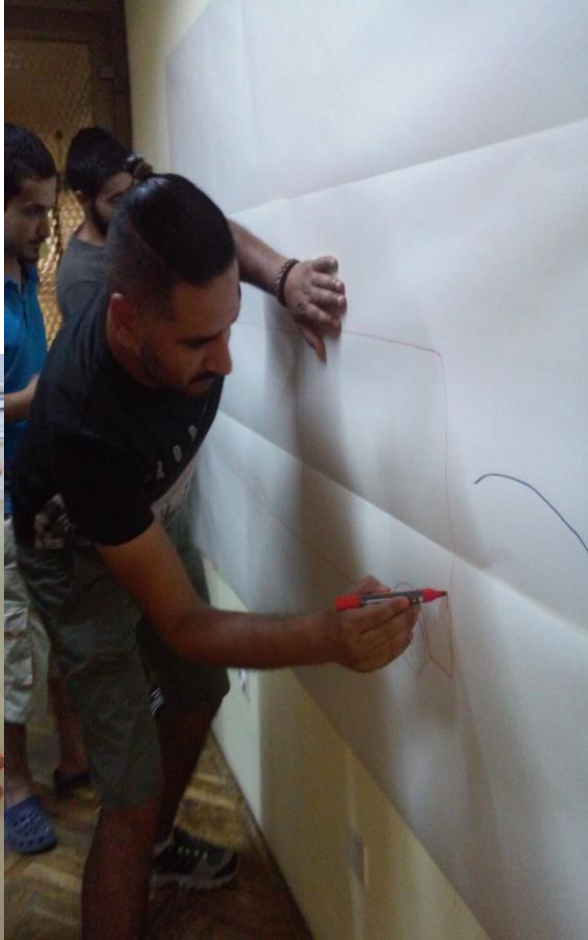
- Integrating basic human dimensions (cognition, emotions, behaviour, corporeality)
- Establishing inner and outer contact
- Replacing non-functioning patterns with new ones enabling spontaneity, flexibility and a full experience of the present moment
- Increasing the ability to make creative and rational life decisions

Methods

- Psychodrama
- Musical therapy
- Drawing, painting, collage...
- Modelling
- Masks
- Dolls
- Mime
- Dance, movement
- Sewing, embroidery
- Fairy tales – bibliotherapy
- Scents, aromas



Work materials



Effects

- Helping users to understand that **they can choose** the way of living in their world
- Empowering them to select **what they want**
- Learning that sometimes there is no freedom of choice – helping them to understand that they are not responsible for not having a choice at all
- Persons with trauma need allies
- **Self-directed approach, restraint from judgement and interpretation**
- Respect and esteem
- Establishing contact through the security of imagination

Creativity

Joseph Zinker, 1977: Creative Process in Gestalt Therapy

- Licence for creativity (to live in a society full of self-control, we learn how to limit spontaneity)
- Aspects of creative therapy: therapy is a process, change, growth, meeting, learning
- Therapist is an artist, using their own inventiveness to help others
- Love as creative tension in therapy (not sentimentality!) encourages trust
- Gestalt is creative therapy: treats the person as an artistic medium in its complexity



Obstacles to creativity

- Fear of failure
- Refusing to play
- Myopia of resources
- Rigid control
- Avoiding frustration
- Links to tradition
- Poor fantasy life
- Fear of the unknown
- Rigid need for balance
- Reluctance to influence (responsibility)



Advantages and disadvantages



- **Adults need to cross the threshold of spontaneous expression**
- **Creative media must be introduced cautiously, gradually, to avoid causing fear and anxiety (male asylum seekers and drawing...)**
- **Caution and professional competence**
- **In therapeutic work, creativity is connected to the joy of creation, play**
- **Uncovers the power of expression and potentials**
- **The unconscious is more easily accesible (compared to verbal methods)**
- **Overcoming resistance**
- **Power and danger: appear attractive – as easy and spectacular. Not the goal!**

Connecting with your feelings through clay modeling – an example of art therapy in working with persons with traumatic experiences



Clay properties

- Soft, slimy, pliable, sensual...
- Appears dirty, but in fact is clean fine dust easily washed, removed from hands, clothes...
- Stimulates the most primary inner processes
- Provides a tactile and kinesthetic experience; our fingertips contain some of the densest areas of nerve endings on the human body
- Offers a natural way of connecting to the body and mind; immediacy of the material naturally integrates the body and mind
- Unity of the material and the sculptor
- Makes one's own feelings closer
- Arouses memories of early experiences

Healing properties

- Has healing properties – sculptors have noticed that cuts heal more quickly after working with clay
- The levels of cortisol (stress hormone) are reduced in 75% participants of artistic production
- Stimulates quicker recovery after disease
- Helps to alleviate anxiety, depression and stress



Clay and feelings

- People who have lost a connection with their feelings or block them lose a connection with their senses
- The sensuality of clay provides a bridge between their senses and their emotions



