

WORKSHOP 6: INTEGRATION AND EMPOWERMENT - EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY GROUP WORKS WITH NEWCOMER ADULTS (IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES) IN TORONTO

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As for the vulnerable populations who had traumatizing experiences, integration to the life in Canada and resolve the issues remaining with them can be a very tough process. Mostly, newcomers do not have the words/language to understand and express their experiences. Expressive arts therapy (EXAT) is a way of using the arts to help newcomers with a variety of challenges.

EXAT assumes that everyone has the capacity to respond creatively to the situations that they find themselves in. By engaging in play and the arts, we are taken into the world of the imagination, where possibilities can be seen that are not evident in our daily lives. We can find resources that we did not know we had and possible solutions that were previously hidden from us. Instead of focusing on deficiencies and dwelling on problems, the EXAT approach is resource-based and solution-focused. The practice of the arts is an activity that involves the senses and emotions. In an EXAT session, we do not only talk about our difficulties, we actively engage in artistic practices that give us a bodily and emotional relationship to what we are going through.

In order to help to transition and integration process of participants to Canada, EXAT group work aims to empower them through:

- Exploring their journeys' from different perspectives
- Connecting to their external and internal resources for rebuilding the future that is meaningful to them
- Encouraging creativity and self-expression
- Engaging socially and emotionally, creating the foundation for interpersonal relationships
- Strengthening self-esteem based on knowledge of their own resources

This workshop will share results of a total of 22 EXAT group works that were held with newcomer adults in three different agencies in Toronto by using the EXAT techniques including music, dance, movement, painting, storytelling, clay, collage, etc.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Participants will be able to learn about the methodology and architecture of Expressive Arts Therapy in the context of newcomer adult population.
2. Participants will get motivated to explore and apply Expressive Arts Therapy techniques for the populations with integration difficulties

References

Repatriation and testimony - Expressive Arts Therapy, Melinda Ashley Meyer (2007)

Expressive Arts Therapy for Traumatized Children and Adolescents: A Four-Phase Model, Carmen Richardson (2016)