Activity Therapy with Elementary and Junior High Students

Region 13 Training
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Agenda

• Introduction
• Why Expressive Arts
• Individual vs. Group
• How to plan your interventions
• Pulling it all together
Why Expressive Arts

- Activity therapy is a compromise between play therapy and traditional talk therapy for children who have reached concrete operations.
- Integrates child’s non-verbal way of expressing emotions with new cognitive abilities.
- Requires a varied supply of materials.
Use of Play Therapy Language is Important

TEEL Method

- **Tracking**
  - Say what you are seeing
- **Empathy**
  - Reflect Feeling
- **Encouragement**
  - Focus on Process – not Praise
- **Limit Setting**
  - Help with boundaries
Use of Play Therapy Language is Important

Encouragement

• Focuses on process
• Takes emphasis off of the adult
• Promotes a sense of self-understanding and self-satisfaction
• IS NOT THE SAME AS PRAISE

Limit Setting

• State the Feeling
• State the Limit
• Give Two Viable Choices
• Restate the Limit
Activity Therapy Includes

• Play Therapy
• Art (all mediums)
• Sandtray
• Projects (models etc.)
• Puppet shows
• Group Games
• Adventure Therapy
Rationale for Activity Therapy

• Provide means by which to open doors and windows to their inner worlds
• To get what they are keeping guarded inside—out in the open so client can deal with it
• Projections come from inside us, from our experiences, from what we know and care about. They tell a lot about our sense of self. (Oaklander, 1988)
Rationale for Activity Therapy

• Provides the opportunity for self-awareness and self-ownership (Oaklander, 1988)

• Activities stimulate all the senses and elicit thoughts and feelings the individual may be unaware of or have difficulty expressing.

• Facilitate healing as all aspects of self are expressed and integrated (Allan, 1988)
Rationale for Activity Therapy

• Provide symbols and metaphors as a non-threatening means to express themselves.

• No interpretations or attempt to translate for counselor’s understanding are necessary
Choosing An Activity

• What do you know about child?
  – Age
  – Verbal vs. Non-verbal expression
  – Confidence with artistic ability
  – Level of resistance/threat

• Stay with the medium that is most effective with child’s expression
  – No need to change each week
  – Allow serial development (Allan, 1988)
  – Allow child to lead
Steps

• Activity
  – Counselor Keenly Observant
  – Counselor Not Overly Focused on Client
  – Counselor Does Not Engage Client Verbally

• Processing Activity

• Ending the Activity
  – Check-in: How are you feeling right now?
  – Respect the intensity- do not leave the client there
  – Talk about school etc. to help client acclimate
Processing An Activity

• Allow the student time to complete project (might have to give a time warning)

• Survey project as a whole.
  – How are you feeling as you look at it?

• Observe child’s process.
  – How is the student feeling?
  – How did the student approach the activity?
  – Where did the student spend the most time/energy?
  – Where is the energy in the product?
Processing An Activity

• Ask a few processing questions. Not too many.
  – Better to reflect content than to ask why
• Start more general then move to more specific
• Reflect the answer before moving on to next question.
• Describe what you see
  – I see this creature over here has lots of colors
Processing An Activity

• Allow silence and time during processing.

• Stay within the metaphor as much as possible.

• Include questions about observed process. (“I noticed you put this one in and took it out a couple of times.”)
Individual vs. Group

**Individual**
- Does not rely on child verbalizing
- Use of play language is important
- Provides student opportunity to learn about self
- Provides a sense of fun enhancing connection

**Group**
- Use an intentional model
- Remember your group dynamics
- Students learn interpersonal skills with peers
- Provides connection and element of fun
Group Dynamics At Play
Tuckman’s Model

Figure 2-1: The Five Stages of Team Development

Stage 1: FORMING
Team acquaints and establishes ground rules

Stage 2: STORMING
Members resist control by group leaders and show hostility

Stage 3: NORMING
Members work together developing close relationships and feelings of camaraderie

Stage 4: PERFORMING
Team members work toward getting their job done

Stage 5: ADJOURNING
Team may disband on achieving their goals or because members leave
Group Dynamics At Play
How it works with Activity Groups

• **Forming** - Initiating group rules with the group is an important first step & icebreakers help group members to feel more comfortable

• **Storming** – The group overcomes challenges presented by group activities and learn to trust other group members

• **Norming** – group members are starting establish trusting relationships
Group Dynamics At Play
How it works with Activity Groups

• **Performing** – the real work happens, individual goals begin to be met, and the group members find deeper meaning in their work

• **Adjourning** – Termination of the group. A “take-away” is important. And group members end their time together.
ABC - Method

• A – Affect

• B – Behavior

• C – Cognition

• All of these hold equal weight and are part of the holistic process of addressing issues with group members
Bringing it all Together

Some of us learn best by doing

We will do:

– Icebreakers
– Trust Building Activities
– Personal Goal Building

– And then discuss......
References