



Art therapy for prison
inmates with mental
health issues.

Keywords;

Art therapy

Calmness

Aggression

Self-esteem

Mental health

Background information

- Being sentenced to X amount of months/years in prison can destroy a persons self-esteem which can lead to serious mental health problems.
- The current statistic of self-harm and suicide attempts, due to mental health problems, is appalling and more needs to be done.
- Between 10%-90% of prisoners are believed to have mental health problems. It was also recorded that in the year 2016 alone, there were 120 suicides in a prison in England (House of Commons, 2017).

Shocking statistics;

- Suicide attempts are 8.6 times more within those in prison, compared to those who are not.
- A staggering 70% of inmates who have died from their suicide attempts had already been identified as having mental health needs, yet not much was done to help this.
- However, bare in mind the 70% of deaths. The PPO (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman), discovered that only half of these people first entering prison were classed as mentally unstable, which shows most developed mental issues during the first weeks of their sentence.

(Prison Reform Trust, 2016)

Most successful therapy; art therapy

- Art therapy allows the prison inmate to express themselves, in a calm manner (psychologytoday.com, 2016).
- Gussak (2004) created a pilot study, which involved a blind review, of the effectiveness of art therapy on prison inmates. The raters were not aware of which prison member created the art, or whether they were completed before or after art therapy. It showed that prison inmates began to express themselves in the art work and began to gain confidence and well-being in themselves again.

So... What IS art therapy?

- It is a form of psychotherapy which uses art to allow the patient to communicate and express how they are feeling with the support of a trained professional in a therapeutic room (healthcareers.nhs.uk, 2019).
- Art therapy aims to;
 - Give a safe time and place with someone who won't judge
 - Make sense of feeling and understand oneself better
 - Resolve complicated feelings
 - Find peace with the struggles of everyday life(Mind.org.uk, 2019).

Art therapy exercises

- Collages
- Phototherapy
- Digital art
- Family sculpture
- PPAT (draw a Person Picking An apple from a Tree)

PPAT

- PPAT was used within two quantitative studies, conducted by Gussak (2007), on North Florida prison to measure how effective art therapy is with inmates, especially those with depression. Participants were asked to draw themselves or someone else picking an apple from a tree. A method used to analyse the drawings was the Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale (FEATS). Results showed that there was a large decrease in depression within those who participated in the program, there was also less aggression towards officers.

Examples of their work..





**Now. Let me show you what art
therapy is like 😊**

(Lothrop, 2015).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjj7zIW088s>



Research questions;

- How effective is art therapy for mental health issues?
- Is art therapy a useful therapy for prison inmates?
- What are the benefits of art therapy?

Discussion;

- Throughout the research carried out, it is evident that art therapy is highly successful in helping prison inmates overcome mental health issues (Gussak, 2007).
- Going back to the background info; House of Commons (2017) was too broad with their estimate of how many prisoners have depression (10% - 90%), may show they don't care enough to really find out how many there are.
- None of the studies state which race or gender the inmate are.
- Majority of studies were conducted in America.

Ethics;

- Respect the confidentiality of participants name and background
- Ensure quality and integrity

Methods

- For this, I will use a literature review.
- A literature review is an evaluation and search of available literature in a specific subject or topic area.
- A literature review contains four aims;
 - Presents the literature in an organised way(rfl.org.uk, 2014).

Conclusion

- Art therapy is extremely successful in helping inmates overcome, and also helped them gain self-esteem and calmness, which resulted in less aggressive behaviours. However, when doing the actual project, some points will need to be considered, these are the age, race and where the inmates are from.



THE END

Thank you for listening!

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