

Art therapy and psychoeducation workshop: A practice-based presentation

Lynette Callaghan

The workshop presenter, Penelope James, who is employed at a private psychiatric hospital, explained how the integration of visual journaling with a psychoeducational skills programme assisted her clients in the implementation of well-being practice in their daily lives.

Penelope began with a clear timeline for her hospital-setting sessions. Initially a group check-in took place, in which clients were encouraged to share their feelings and concerns. This check-in concluded with mindful, guided meditation in order to prepare clients for the follow-up psychoeducational skills learning stage. The psychoeducational stage aimed to develop new ways to regulate emotions and to utilise helpful thinking and behaviour patterns. Cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behavioural therapy processes were employed by the therapist during this stage in order to identify and adjust clients' self-identified unhelpful thinking. An unhelpful thinking example of procrastination was included in the workshop, along with a PowerPoint visual of the therapist's whiteboard notes from her skills teaching session. These notes illustrated the skills management of feelings about, and reasons for, procrastination. From this position in the session Penelope noted that her clients were ready to integrate the visual journaling process. At first, journaling took the form of a written, personal account of potential challenges encountered when clients harnessed the psychoeducational skills in their daily lives. Image-making journaling then followed as clients were encouraged to



Figure 2. Penelope James presenting the workshop, Melbourne, 2017.

creatively explore the skills, benefits and/or blocks encountered, which also involved anything that had surfaced for the client.

Clients' visual journaling was shared with the workshop attendees. Each journal provided creative evidence of the integration of personal journaling responses in reference to skills learning. One powerful mixed media visual which included text, was titled 'Dual Image – left side without the skill – right side life with the skill'. The psychoeducational skill of 'Effective Rethinking and Paired Relaxation, Distress Tolerance' was cited by the client under the image (see Figure 1).

These examples of the clients' visual journaling work effectively modelled the process for us, and as a result we were able to engage in our own personal, written journaling. We, the attendees, were invited to explore an overwhelming negative thought which was to be replaced with a coping thought. Engaging in this experiential activity provided personal insight into the effectiveness of this strategy. An art-making response to the skills learning was not possible within the workshop time frame. The allocation of time for this activity can be addressed when planning for future workshops.

Penelope's practical, well-researched and person-centred art therapy process facilitated authentic workshop learning.



Figure 1. Workshop participant, *Dual Image – left side without the skill – right side life with the skill*, 2017 (the client has given consent for her work to be used).

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