

## **Art Therapy - not only for children ...**

*This compilation of exercises has been made on the basis of experiences gathered by the teachers of Gimnazjum nr 22 z Oddziałami Integracyjnymi in Katowice during their participation in the course organized within „Step by step to success” project in Erasmus + Programme Action KA1.*

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**Art therapy**, which is a form of expressive therapy that uses the creative process of making art to improve a person's physical, mental and emotional well-being. It comprises a wide range of techniques. In our compilation we will focus on therapy by the means of choreography, music and theater. These three areas are natural form of applying the instinctive need for physical, mental and emotional development. They are also excellent means to relise one's individuality, to regain disordered contact with the surrounding and to help affirmation of one's personality.

**Choreography** therapy uses therapeutical features of dance. Its basic elements – rhythm and movement become the platform to achieve the harmony of body and mind, enable the process of learning oneself together with his emotions and communication with other people. Dance is not treated as the designed sequences of steps but as free outletting of emotions. ICombining work and fun dance creates a unique instrument that unites body and mind. It is a perfect tool in work with the hyperactive or autistic children. However not only disabled people can benefit from choreography therapy but also all who are interested in the development of awareness and want to use their creative resources. It exercises motor coordination, the sense of rhythm and harmony. It is extremally valid in communication with one's own body and unblocking these areas where the energy has been imorisoned.

**Music therapy** uses therapeutical features of sounds It is often a trigger and catalyzer of emotions. By the means of music it is much easier to communicate with an autistic, blind or even hyperactive child. Being a non-verbal form of communication it gives the opportunity for pleasant experiences and relaxation. Matching different musical strustures (percepted by ear) to movement ( for example clapping, tapping or playing) influences both productine and receptive function of human development.

**Drama therapy** is the use of theatrical techniques to fascilitate mental growth and promote mental health. It is not only the preparation and staging a play but it also includes a range of relaxation techniques. Introduction of these creative activities allows for outletting emotional tension, defining

one's place in a team, awakening interests and learning the individual possibilities. Very useful are the paratheatrical ones that incorporate the surrounding reality and whose scenario is open. The teacher's role is limited to initiating interaction and supervising the activity while these the participants who influence the process of the game. Drama therapy is directed toward activation of participants in experiencing the cultural achievements. It affects also the cognitive development (memorizing, concentration, divisibility of attention, sense of direction), furthermore it teaches logical thinking and develops imagination.

**Exercise 1 Four seasons of the year:** Winter – we are frozen and cramped, we move slowly to the rhythm, However our feet are stuck to the ground so we can make only short movements with the rest of the body.

Spring – the intensity of our movements grows as we feel the warmth of the first beams and now we can also lift the feet.

Summer – it is hot and we have a lot of fun which we show in our merry movements

Autumn – it is getting colder and it often rains, so we have to omit the puddles and fight against the wind, the music slows down and so do we

**Exercise 2 Tree:** We take an embryonic position, as we are the roots, the according to the music we start growing, first the trunk, then the branches, the twigs and the leaves, which make a pleasant swoosh in the end .

**Exercise 3 Counting-out rhyme:** We stand with legs a little apart. Given body parts have numbers, left side odd ones and right sides odd ones, starting from ear, shoulder, elbow, hip knee, ankle, with palm in the end. Two different numbers have to touch each other according to the command, for example right ear and left knee. Gradually the music is faster and sequences are longer. Then participants invent their own sequences which they use while dancing.

**Exercise 4 Square dance:** We stand in the middle (5) of the imaginary keyboard and move to the rhythm placing our limbs on the other eight numbers. This square can be also drawn on the floor. Again the music is faster and commands longer. In the end the participants invent their own sequences.

**Exercise 5 Little self massage:** We sit on the floor and start massaging our toes, with the growing intensity of music, grows the intensity of the massage, while we move towards the centre. We repeat the same with every limb.

**Exercises 6 Mirror:** We stand with the legs slightly apart, opposite to each other. One person closes his eyes and lays his hands on the partner's hands. Not changing the position on the ground we start to move, one partner invents the movement, the other with the closed eyes has to follow it. After a short warm-up the music is switched on.

**Exercise 7 Sculpture:** One partner is a sculptor,, the other is the material, which changes its shape according to the sculptor's invention. Every command is given by means of touch and its intensity.

**Exercise 8 Paralysis:** One partner stands with legs slightly apart, firmly on the ground, eyes closed, muscles relaxed. The other partner pushes him causing deviation from the perpendicular. The body comes back like a spring to its former position. Everything is accompanied by music.

**Exercise 9 Trust me:** One partner is „blind” with eyes closed, the other one is a guide whose task is to lead his charge through the obstacles. They cannot talk to each other, however the guide must find a non-verbal way to describe the obstacles. On the other side the blind needs a lot of concentration and absolute belief to his partner.

**Exercise 10 Follow the Voice:** One person, blind again has to carry something precious somewhere but does not know the destination. He follows the voice of the group who pronounces a repetitive sound, for example „tralalala”. Again it is all about mutual trust.

**Exercise 11 Passing energy:** According to music the participants are moving constantly changing directions. While passing they touch each other sharing this way their energy. When the music gets really fast, sometimes it can resemble the some ritual dance.

**Exercise 12 Drawing emotions:** Participants lay on the big sheets of paper and their partners draw their partners sketch the outlines of their bodies. Then, using different colours, patterns and shapes we fill the inside trying to express one's emotions. Then the picture is analyzed by the group and the given person can confirm or contradict their opinions.

**Exercise 13 Role changing:**

- Participants invent a character and set this person in a particular situation, then play this role. In case it is too difficult to invent a character, participants can draw sheets of paper when the character or the situation, or even both are described. While acting they should use all the means of communication that consist a role (text, mimics, gestures, intonation, props etc). However it is important to remember that the stage props cannot dominate the role.
- Next either the character stays the same but the situation changes, or the other way round. In addition they have to incorporate in their acting some unexpectedly appearing special effects, like the sound of falling rain or dog barking.

**Exercise 14 Let's talk:** One partner looks for a precious subject hidden by his partner. When he eventually finds it, the other one tries to take it from him. They are different creatures in a different world speaking different languages. All the tricks are allowed except violence and words. There should be a time limit, however like in real life, sometimes the success is far, still we have to try.