

Art Psychotherapy - ETS

A young Person from Year 9 received Art Therapy sessions in school with Art Psychotherapist Georgina Hughes:
(Name altered for confidentiality)

The young person's views on Art Therapy.

“Fear in life is a fundamental thing.

Some people choose not to live their lives due to being afraid of what is going to happen if they do.

People fear different things; they fear a lot of things to be honest.

Most people fear not being accepted.

People fear differences; they fear their own and in others.

Some people think being different is wrong.”

“This is a drawing (see below, p2) I did in one of my art therapy sessions. This shows my panic and my worries present in my every day life, lurking around me. I chose dark colours to express anger, depression and the oppressive feelings. The roots at the bottom of the picture are what fear itself leads to. Fear is feeding the other emotions, like the panic and worry I have about most things.

I would recommend art therapy because you get to talk to someone who is neutral to your situation. They have a different perspective that can really help you out. Its good to make art about your life. Its also good to talk with someone who is not your teacher, or family or friends as they can't always help.

Creativity is an active way for me to relieve my stress and panic.”



Art Therapy Case Study (re above young person).

Ben was referred for art therapy with ETS due to school staff and educational psychologists having concerns around his aggression and difficulties with peers. Ben was a year nine pupil, originally from Zimbabwe. After an initial consultation with school staff, Ben's family and Ben himself, he was offered a seven week art therapy assessment. This aim of this assessment was to gain further understanding of Ben's perspective on his difficulties, to assess his ability to engage with art therapy and to discuss and set realistic goals for any therapeutic plan.

Ben's had also had many years involvement with CAMHS psychiatry, while this involvement had been very helpful for the family as a whole, Ben had not been able to engage with the service as an individual. CAMHS staff supported a referral to ETS and continued to liaise with myself, the art psychotherapist, throughout Ben's therapy with ETS. Ben felt more able to engage with art therapy than verbal therapies as it allowed him to express feelings and thoughts that he could not put into words. By allowing himself to express through colour, form, symbol, metaphor and story, Ben was able to communicate feelings and memories that had haunted him for many years. Some of these feelings Ben had not ever been able to articulate verbally.

Ben's experiences in Zimbabwe included loss and separation from family members at a crucially young age. Ben had a great deal of anger as a result of personal trauma and as a result of having lived under a corrupt and dangerous regime, his family denied many rights, denied freedom. Through his art therapy Ben was able to slowly begin making links between his aggressive behaviours, his angry feelings and his personal history. As much as expression through image making is an important part of the art therapy process, as important is the relationship with the therapist; whose role it is to hold and help process difficult and overwhelming feelings and emotions. Ben's art therapy sessions continued on a weekly basis throughout a whole school year. Ben's teachers reported that his behaviour improved to such an extent that he totally ceased to have violent outbursts and fights in school (once a daily occurrence). Staff also reported this previously isolated pupil, was making more friends and appearing more confident and generally happier in school.

Ben reported feeling more confident, more accepting of himself and a lot less angry and felt much less anxious. Ben described moving from "wanting to hurt someone every day" to becoming "wound up maybe once every six weeks, but now I remind myself to try and be distracted and to let the anger go, and I do; it's not worth the stress".

Georgina Hughes - ETS - June 2009