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ART THERAPY WITH TEENAGERS GROUPS: RESIGNIFICATION OF LIVING

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INTRODUCTION

"The perfume yearns and quivers inside the bud exclaiming: Woe to me! Time goes by and even so I don't know where to go or even what I search". *

In this search for himself and the construction of his own identity, the adolescents find the disease, other losses and, sometimes, death. Feelings such as hopelessness, emptiness, loneliness, fears, sadness and depression permeate the long journey towards the incorporation and acceptance of the new reality.

Art therapy has been described as an important therapeutic resource in Pediatric Psycho-Oncology in the processes of consciousness of the illness and treatment as well as in the development of the subject.



OBJECTIVE

To promote the development of the adolescent's creative potentiality through therapeutical workshops, utilizing artistic resources.

METHODOLOGY

Setting: Room of Psychology at Centro Infantil Boldrini

Population: 612 adolescents in different phases of the treatment were assisted on weekdays during a period of four years.

Procedures: Assistance was carried out in opened groups and unique sessions utilizing several artistic techniques and modalities of expression with a therapeutical purpose.

Data analysis: After each workshop, the artistic productions in both Art-therapy and Psychanalysis. The inner psychic contents which could be observed in a playful and creative way, were manifested allowing the categorization of some existential themes experienced by the adolescents.

RESULTS



Free expression

This workshop aimed the utilization of creativity and free expression of fantasies, mechanisms of defense and anguishes related to the process of illness.

Music

Experiences with relaxation and mentalization

- 1- Rhythm and body expression exercises
- 2- Use of appropriate music, breathing exercises and body relaxation
- 3- Mentalization and visualization of an important scene in the adolescent's life
- 4- Creative expression: through gestures, drawings and poems, they revealed each one's inner world



The experience of creation archetypes was allowed through the elements: color, shape, volume, spacial disposition and others.



This experience aimed the apprehension of the world and the reality in which the adolescents live, integrating the historic and subjective aspects.

Story telling and drawing

The purpose of this workshop was to allow the identification with the story and the projection of unconscious contents



Story: the strawberries
date: 06/14/96
patient: C
age: 18 years

C. demonstrated confusion in psychic terms in which the limits among despair, fear, desire and hope are imprecise. The strawberry is at the bottom of the precipice, submerged in despair as a representation of the conscious mind. The bottom of the precipice represents the unconscious mind, place for the desire. Even though C. has been going through a period of psychic desorganization, there is still hope. ("...the place where... hope is.")

P.M.E., Sex:F,13 years old Diagnosis: LLA(with no evidence of disease)

Life hung by a thread

I bought an acrobatic rope with the disease of all those who come to be treated here. At the beginning we start the disease the same way the acrobat starts to walk on the rope. As he walks on the rope, we can observe the phases of the disease. The cloud represents the most difficult phases we must go through. But also as we walk, it seems a dark tunnel and at the end of it, a light represents the cure."

Story: The Avrobat (O Equilibrista, Almeida & Lopes)

Story theme: search for balancing in the daily routine

Psychological Analysis:

This patient included in her drawing the polarities life-death and health-disease, through the antagonism between the dark cloud and the sun. The cloud threatens her, demonstrating satisfaction and pleasure with the destruction, and the sun represents the "light at the end of the tunnel" and the cure. She mentioned the fragility for keeping the patient integrated and alive.

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The use of Art-therapy using stories and drawings brought up existential themes concerning the patients, allowing the mobilization of important contents for the elaboration of conflicts. The psychological analysis showed: the uncertainty of the journey of life concerning cancer, the denial of the destructivity of illness, ambivalent expressions, the dark threat of cancer, the presence of hope, the presence of other in the process of recovering, life and death: life hung by a thread, discovering new motivations for life.

CONCLUSIONS

As a results of the utilization of Art therapy in these workshop, we could observe:

- Their recognition as people capable of creating and recreating and even despite the disease, improving their health condition and making them harmonize better with themselves and with the group.
- The exchange of experience facilitating the internalization and maturation concerning the aspects related to the illness process and the mourning elaboration.
- Learning through experience, making them less vulnerable.
- The transformation and transmutation of pain into creative process, helping them attribute new meanings to their lives.