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HEALING LIKE AN ARTIST

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The relationship between art and the human psyche is as old as the first study on humans. Art is considered to be an expression of the inner world of the artist and often a reflection of society—an outer manifestation of an inner state. Psychology is the study of human behavior and mental processes. Art therapy, therefore, is an amalgamation of using art materials to bring therapeutic meaning to the inner experiences of a person using the principles of psychology.

In simple words, the right side of our brain is considered to be the more emotional, creative side while the left side of our brain is considered to be the more logical one. As human beings we experience our world at a sensory, emotional, and cognitive level. Our bodies are a reservoir of memories. Art, music, and other expressive arts therapies provide a container for these non-verbal aspects of the human experience to help resolve deep-seated issues that we are often unable to put into words.

It is common knowledge that putting our emotions down on paper reduces the power it holds on us. When people are in distress, they are unable to see alternative perspectives on a given situation. Art therapy engages the mind, body, and spirit allowing you to step out of the problem and view it in a different light. Almost as if you are a part of a painting. Then you can see a part and not the entire painting. In order to see the whole painting, one needs to step out of the

painting, which allows you to reflect on it. This process in art therapy is what allows for a reflective dialogue to happen within the individual which helps to emotionally process their experiences. No training in art is necessary because the goal is not the end product but the process of making the art form and deriving the meaning it holds for the individual.

Art therapy works well with everyone from children to geriatric population. The variety of issues it deals with range from wellness and stress management to addressing adverse incidents like trauma, difficult childhood experiences, grief, loss and bereavement. Art therapists work with individuals, couples, and groups in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, mental health clinics and rehabilitation centres.

During the pandemic, it's natural to feel anxiety, grief or a wide variety of emotions. Emotions are not positive or negative, good or bad. Emotions are sensations, a source of energy. Energy cannot be destroyed or repressed, it can only change form. Let us acknowledge these emotions and channelise the energy into creating something.

Here are some ways you utilise the practice of art therapy at home during the Covid-19 lockdown.

IF YOU ARE ALONE:

What you need :

-A few sheets of paper, Water, Brushes., Blue, yellow and red paint.

Process :

Wet the paper from end to end. Start with the blue paint. Put a drop of blue on the wet sheet. Paint with it using your brush. There is no right or wrong stroke. Just paint the way it intuitively

comes to you. Pay attention to how the colour moves, what feelings is it invoking, what it reminds you of....

Once you've painted with blue, ask yourself: What images/thoughts/feelings came to your mind when you were painting with the colour blue?

What characteristics do you feel the colour blue signifies? Can you think of time in your life when you felt that way?

Take a fresh sheet of paper and try the same thing with Yellow. And lastly, with Red. The above can be tried when you find it hard to manage your thoughts. It is a good grounding technique.

IF YOU HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND AT HOME WITH YOU:

What you need :

A big paper, Some brushes , Two colours of paint (red and blue)

Process :

Find a comfortable place to sit, free of distractions. Place the sheet of paper between you and your friend/family member. This task needs to be done without talking. The conversation will happen with the brushes, in the process of painting. Start by choosing one colour each. Let the first person start by painting on the sheet while the second person waits and watches. Much like a conversation, one talks and the other listens, only this time it will be without words. When the first person finishes, the second one starts with their own colour. This process of painting in turns continues until you both feel (non-verbally) that you've had your conversation.

Once you both mutually agreed that it's the end, stand up and view the painting you've created. You are now allowed to talk and discuss how you feel about what you've created together and what the experience was like, sharing your artistic space with the other person.