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**ART THERAPY AS A FORM OF EDUCATING AND  
INTEGRATING CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH IN RISK  
SOCIETY**

**АРТ-ТЕРАПІЯ ЯК ФОРМА ВИХОВАННЯ ТА ІНТЕГРУВАННЯ  
ДІТЕЙ І МОЛОДІ В СУСПІЛЬСТВО РИЗИКУ**

*У статті зроблено спробу описати детермінанти підтримки та надання допомоги дітям і молоді в суспільстві ризику засобами арт-терапії. Автор розглядає арт-терапію як вид психотерапії, що набирає популярності, усе частіше використовуються в немедичному середовищі, у тому числі в роботі з дітьми та молоддю, які потребують підтримки в психолого-педагогічних установах, громадських центрах, терапевтичними агентами, які беруть участь у реабілітації та вихованні соціально дезадаптованих осіб тощо. У статті підкреслюється необхідність професіоналізації при наближенні до ключових питань арт-терапії в контексті теорії та практики.*

***Ключові слова:** арт-терапія, суспільство ризику, неблагополучні сім'ї.*

**Introduction.** During the twentieth century it was believed that the solution to all the problems of political, social and economic nature lies within the development of science and technology. History, however, has verified this thesis. The turn of the millennium brought on new, previously unidentified threats resulting from that very change. Threats, which due to their pace and scope, have become unpredictable. As a result, the societies

living during the turn of the century turned into a risk society in almost all areas of life. It would suffice just to mention negative population growth, impoverishment of societies, the loss of sense of personal, public, social and professional safety, as well as the uncertainty and the unpredictability, both being drawn by the future [1]. Production of the ubiquitous risk causes the model of consumer society and welfare state «to make way for flexible capitalism, which is currently promoting logic of the instability, uncertainty, as well as short-termism and selective choices» (Mayor, 2001, p. 13). How, then, in such a «fluid» reality can we save humanity expressed by «the ability of an individual to consciously form the course of life and personal development?» The salvation of humanity may be fulfilled solely in a society capable of development, which is «characterized by relations based on mutual support of essential components (individuals, groups, institutions, organizations, associations, communities, etc.) in different schemes (global and local in particular), whose effects of activity provide conditions for individual and collective security and provide its members with relatively stable standards of existence (i.e. psychophysical, social, spiritual and cultural)» (Mayor, 2001, p. 13.)

In this day and age, more and more often theses are drawn about the fact that art gives you a chance to save and preserve the true humanity, because aesthetic experience forms the basis of any educational effects [5, 19]. Dealing with art, as well as with creating process produce the sense of inner freedom. Moreover, self-realization helps establish communication and integration with the social environment. Both direct and indirect contact with art help with expressing feelings and emotions, correcting behavioural disorders or recovery of mental balance. Artistic activity provides people with new ideas, creative solutions indispensable in various life situations, helpful in understanding themselves and the world surrounding each human being. In this context, art therapy appears to be of particular importance as one of the forms of psychotherapeutic aid to people.

### **Art therapy - definitional dilemma.**

The term art therapy first appeared in the English language literature and it was used by A. Hill in the early 1940s. The name was popularized much later in Polish literature. Art therapy concept consists of two components: art and therapy, which indicates that this activity is based on two equivalent components: the art (works), and therapy. According to the definition of The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) art therapy is a form of psychotherapy which treats artistic media as primary means of communication. Within supportive environment, which is conducive to the therapeutic relationship, the partaker of an art therapy session can create images and objects in order to explore and share the meanings that can be read from them. As a consequence, individuals can better understand themselves and the nature of their problems and difficulties. This in turn can lead to a positive and lasting change in their perception of themselves, current relationships and the generally understood quality of life.

The American Art Therapy Association emphasizes that art therapy is a career (profession), which uses creative process to raise the level of physical, mental and emotional well-being of people of all ages. Art therapy is based on the assumption that the creative process used for self-expression helps people resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage their own behaviour, reduce stress, boost self-esteem and self-awareness, as well as gain insight. Art therapy interpreted this way integrates various fields of human development; it combines visual arts (drawing, painting, sculpture and other visual forms) and knowledge about the creative process with models of personal counselling and psychotherapy.

In fact, no one questions therapeutic values of contact with art but a discord appears in the context of perception and definition of the term «art therapy», especially unfounded, unauthorized inclusion of forms of artistic activity into its scope of application in order to promote development and improve the quality of human life. Type of activities, that are not strict art therapy, such as creativity training, aesthetic education, composition training, training of creative thinking, interpersonal sensitivity training or

personal development training, etc., are often inaccurately recognized as art therapy. What is more, art therapy does not include mere creative activities that make use of different artistic techniques and combinations thereof, which commonly take place within various forms of education. It can be noted, though, that such over-extension of the concept of art therapy can be perceived by studying the extensive literature on the subject.

Precise definition of art therapy, which does not allow any free interpretation, is presented by M. Stasiakiewicz (2006): «Art therapy is a type of psychotherapy, i.e. a specialized method of helping people. It involves intentional application of pre-programmed psychological effects, among which the creation and reception of art are those most prominent. The purpose of these effects is the removal or reduction of disturbances in mental, somatic and social functioning, which is associated with unlocking development opportunities. Therapeutic relationship, which forms between a psychotherapist and a patient / client, constitutes an essential healing factor in art therapy and in other types of psychotherapy as well. However, what determines the specificity of art therapy, distinguishes it from other forms of psychotherapeutic help, is the use of reception of art and artistic-creative activity of a patient / client for medicinal purposes, activity implemented under the guidance of a therapist and / or in cooperation with him in any chosen field of art. Therefore, the existence of a specific relationship between the therapist and the client / patient in the course of creating and / or reception of art constitutes the specificity of art therapy as a method of psychotherapy» [3, 479–480].

Fine relationship with a therapist is considered a necessity for a therapy to be successful, relation based on mutual understanding, support and honesty. Art therapy session usually consists of two parts: a practical and a reflective one. Both these components of such meeting are inseparable. Art therapist is required to create optimal environment equipped with the qualities of a safe space in a physical, legal, medical, psychological, and cultural sense, and as a specialist, such a person should stand out with high level of knowledge, skills and competences.

Similarly to other psychotherapeutic methods art therapy can be performed basing on a variety of theoretical foundations, such as psychoanalytic, humanistic-existential, behavioural-cognitive, systemic or eclectic. In all organizational forms, i.e. individual, group and family sessions.

Wide repertoire of art therapy interactions contributed to the distinction of two meanings of the art therapy concept: a narrow one, as a therapy using arts and bearing the name of a plastic art therapy, otherwise known as painting therapy [4], and a wider meaning covering music therapy, choreotherapy, bibliotherapy, and further therapeutic measures using theatre, film and visual arts, such as painting, sculpture, graphics and other [5]. This article adopts a broader meaning of the term, treating the therapy through art as a term encompassing a variety of ways to use art for therapeutic effects.

According to members of the Association of Therapists and Art therapists-*Linie* (<http://www.linie.org.pl/>) we can distinguish numerous effects and benefits coming from art therapy. As a result of the creative process a person experiences:

- increased level of knowledge about themselves,
- release and recovery of the accumulated emotions,
- increase in awareness of motives behind their own actions and behaviour,
- stress level decrease,
- activation of the sphere of non-verbal communication, expression and spontaneity,
- enhanced sense of agency and security.

Art therapy allows you to:

- develop own creative activities,
- non-verbal communication,
- express own experiences and feelings,
- understand and satisfy needs,
- perceive the world multisensory,
- accept yourself and others more effectively,

- develop positive habits and reactions,
- relax and rest [6].

### **Art therapy - to help children and the youth.**

Family as an educational environment is subjected to numerous transformations which often lead to a lessened sense of security or even increase the feeling of threat among its members.

Referring back to the concept of the risk society it should be noted that these days many families create an actual or potential threat to proper functioning of their members, especially children, who become the main subject of educational and supportive actions. Such family is known as a dysfunctional family or a family with issues. In English literature, such a dysfunctional family is referred to as *family at risk*. In the theory of threats context we can distinguish objective factors that disturb the safe operation of a family, including domestic violence, addiction, divorce, migration (including euro-orphans, etc.), 3B syndrome (Eng. poverty, unemployment, homelessness). Declining sense of security is also affected by subjective factors, such as the ratio and the evaluation of changes occurring in the family, including changes in social roles, hierarchy of values, growing individualism and personal freedom of family members, fading of traditional social norms and family structures.

At this point we should emphasize that childhood and adolescence are periods in human development when the most intense of changes take place, the changes that fundamentally and irreversibly affect our way of life. During the adolescence transformations of biological (pubescence and adolescence), mental (cognitive reorganization) and social (socialization) nature overlap and mutually condition each other.

Transformations and aberrations occurring not only within family, but also within other educational environments, such as peer group, school, local neighbourhood, often generate a lot of problems that require therapeutic action. Therapy through art is now becoming one of the ways to reach out to individuals and groups who require assistance and support. Art therapy is used to work with mentally ill, mentally disabled, as well as in treatment of

the elderly and chronically ill. It is a form of therapeutic activity of wide application in non-medical environment, including working with children and the youth requiring support. Psychological and pedagogical facilities for the rehabilitation and education of socially maladjusted individuals and ordinary educational centres have become places where different forms of artistic expression can be found [7, 178]. Art therapy has been applied separately in working with children and the youth who have emotional problems or learning difficulties.

The following table presents courses of action proposed by B. Kasprzak [8, 83] which should be chosen while forecasting and conducting classes in the field of art therapy. These guidelines closely correspond to problems and needs of children and young people undergoing therapy through art. The author developed the classification of needs and courses of action implemented by art therapy basing on the experience of working with children and youth suffering from emotional and behavioural difficulties at school, as well as family problems.

*Table 1*

**Creative activities in the treatment of children –  
problems, needs and guidelines [8, 83]**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Needs and guidelines</b>
impaired self-esteem, lack of self-confidence	reinforcement, self-acceptance, self-esteem, support, a sense of security, peers' acceptance
behaviour disorder: aggression, ADHD, hyperactivity, lack of concentration, confusion	energy transferred for organized, constructive actions, clearing one's mind, relaxation
difficulty at school: impaired hand-eye coordination, dyslexia, dysgraphia, school backwardness, anxiety, school phobias	strengthening of motivation, inducing energy and passion, acceptance and raising self-esteem, manual and intellectual development, sense of security, relaxation
significant interpersonal difficulties: inhibition, closing, autistic features, loneliness, isolation, feeling of rejection	increasing self-esteem and self-confidence, acceptance, unlocking emotions, opening to others, integration and identification with a group, positive communication with peers



tendency to dominate, conflictuality, discriminating others	acceptance, directing attention towards the other person and their needs, cooperation
problems: broken families, alcoholism	strengthening of self-image, acceptance, positive relations, relationship with a group
depression, suicidal thoughts, crisis of values, sense of meaninglessness, psychosomatic problems – twitches, incontinence, anxiety	strengthening of self-esteem and own identity, sense of purpose, acceptance, motivation, activity, passion, creativity, positive role models, bond with the group, group affiliation

Extensive use of art therapy can be seen in the process of rehabilitation. As emphasized by M. Konopczyński [9], the founder of the so-called creative rehabilitation: «its main aim is to lead to the creation and successful completion of two processes»:

1. Inducing the development of creative and cognitive processes of socially maladjusted individuals, in order to reorganize the content of the information contained in the operation network and network of values, thereby conducting the cognitive scripts to change and falsified hostile attributions;

2. Change of the external social image of units, in order to enable them to perform other social roles.

Various types of art therapy are often used during the implementation of abovementioned objectives of creative rehabilitation. In isolation conditions the art therapy activity is of particular significance, constituting counterweight to the pejorative subcultural values and contributing positively to the development of appropriate attitudes, personality enrichment, stimulation of self-development, etc.

In turn, functions of art therapy include those described below:

- relaxing function – mainly manifested in creation of conditions facilitating relaxation, provides people with good mood, joy, detachment from everyday worries, it brings leisure, feeling good, happiness, the sense of freedom, liberty, peace, facilitates recreation, gives you the opportunity to break away from current problems;



- educational function – providing extra news, knowledge, allowing us to better understand the processes taking place around us, learning new forms of action, ways to react, expanding the repertoire of behaviours in everyday life, setting new goals;
- corrective function – supports conversion of less valuable or even harmful mechanisms into more valuable, for example, changing negative attitude. In terms of revalidation it gives us the ability to correct disorders in behaviour, thinking, emotions and feelings, to change negative thinking and behaviour towards improved adaptation;
- expressive function – affects the disclosure of repressed emotions, and its purifying nature helps relieve unfavourable tension; it affects the disclosure of repressed emotions, relief of unfavourable tension, manifestation of the whole world of own experiences and feelings kept inside;
- compensatory function is designed to meet the unfulfilled needs of individuals, its mission is also to enable experiencing, living out the states and emotions, which were renounced for various reasons;
- cognitive function teaches naming, expressing and recognizing emotions and desires, broadens sensory awareness, improves the reception of stimuli sensitivity, unlocks creativity, teaches naming, expressing and recognizing emotions;
- regulatory function – allows you to satisfy the need for self-realization and compensation. In terms of personal development – it enables expansion, personality development, meeting the need for self-realization, development of personality, knowledge and self-acceptance.

**Conclusions.** Childhood and growing up in a risk society is often a challenge beyond the capacity of young people, who are often unable to obtain support and assistance from the family, or within other educational environments, such as peer groups, school, local neighbourhood. More and more people require action of a therapeutic nature. Therapy through art becomes an interesting alternative for aiding individuals and groups

demanding wider support. We should bear in mind, however, that art therapy enters a very delicate matter, namely the human psyche and only professional attitude can entitle it to such interfere with human life. Professionalism, ethics and responsibility should be consistently included in the work of art therapists.

This article is also a reflection on the possibilities and consequences of dynamic development of this rapidly developing forms of psychotherapy in Poland. Scientific surveys show, on the one hand, the popularity of art therapy and its fairly common application within non-medical environment, and on the other hand they show its effectiveness while working with individuals or social groups including children and the youth coming from risk families.

Art therapy activities can be carried out using different types of media and adopt various forms. Regardless of whether the methods described in this article are mainly means to diagnostic assessment or therapeutic work, global results of art therapy depend largely on their effectiveness. Therefore, the art therapy methods and tools are being increasingly evaluated with a view to improve them. Professional approach to the key issues related to the further development of the profession also seems to be of great importance, as it is related to professional training of certified art therapists, development of methods and tools, careful separation from creative activities that are not art therapy.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

**Катажина Бялобжеска.** Арт-терапия как форма воспитания и интегрирования детей и молодежи в общество риска.

*В статье сделана попытка описать детерминанты поддержки и оказания помощи детям и молодежи в обществе риска средствами арт-терапии. Автор рассматривает арт-терапию как вид психотерапии, который набирает популярность, все чаще используются в немедицинской среде, в том числе в работе с детьми и молодежью, которые нуждаются в психолого-педагогических учреждениях, общественных центрах, терапевтическими агентами, которые участвуют в реабилитации и воспитании социально дезадаптированных лиц и т.д. В статье подчеркивается необходимость профессионализации при приближении к ключевым вопросам арт-терапии в контексте теории и практики.*

**Ключевые слова:** арт-терапия, общество риска, неблагополучные семьи.

### SUMMARY

**Katarzyna Bialobrzeska.** Art therapy as a form of education and integration of children and the youth in risk society.

*This article attempts to describe the determinants of supporting and assisting the children and young people in risk society by means of art therapy. Therapy through art has been depicted here as a type of psychotherapy gaining popularity, increasingly used in non-medical environment, including working with children and the youth requiring support in the psychological-pedagogical facilities, the community centres, the therapeutic agents involved in the rehabilitation and education of asocially individuals, etc. The article highlights the need for professionalization while approaching the key issues of art therapy in the context of theory and practice.*

**Key words:** art therapy, therapy through art, risk society, a risk family.