

# *The Practice and Exploration of Expressive Art Therapy in the Course of Mental Health of Art Students*

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**Abstract:** Art students in colleges and universities are often faced with the dual pressure of cultural courses and art courses. They have a heavy psychological burden and are the high risk group of mental health problems. They need to carry out more work to guide, alleviate and solve their psychological problems. The expressive art therapy is integrated into the mental health teaching of art students. With painting, music, sand table, ceramic art, OH card, psychodrama and other media, students can actively express their inner feelings, feelings and experiences, so as to achieve the purpose of relieving bad emotions, increasing self-awareness, and promoting the sound development of students' personality.

## 1. Introduction

Art students not only have the common characteristics of college students in the new era, but also have the characteristics of active thinking but vague ideals and beliefs, unique personality but lack of collectivism spirit, strong self-consciousness but lack of organizational discipline, focusing on professional ability but weak cultural foundation, strong practical ability but vulnerable to social atmosphere, rich emotion but extreme personality.[1] Therefore, art students are the high risk group of health problems in colleges and universities, and need to carry out more work to guide, alleviate and solve their psychological problems. The course of college students' mental health education is the most important channel for college students to carry out mental health education. It has a wide range, many audiences and great influence. However, there are still some problems, such as single teaching methods, students in a passive learning state, less active emotional experience and less ideal teaching effect.[2] How to carry out mental health education for art students and improve their interest in learning the curriculum and learning effect is a subject worthy of study.

## 2. Expressive Art Therapy

Expressive art therapy is a new psychotherapy method. It uses nonverbal communication skills as an expression medium to express feelings and experiences of the heart through games, activities, painting, music, dance, drama, etc., so as to achieve emotional expression, self-awareness, personality improvement and growth.[3]

With the help of the media and forms of expression of art, the expressive art therapy allows art students to experience self-cognition, pressure release, personality exploration, emotional

observation and other activities in active participation by creating a relaxed and free atmosphere, so as to perceive, analyze and solve problems by themselves.[4] Through equal guidance, support and attention, teachers provide more ways for art students to participate, experience and comprehend, strive to achieve a "student-centered" educational situation, design and carry out a series of education and teaching activities that meet the psychological needs of art students, such as developing art students' positive cognitive thinking, strengthening art students' positive psychological experience, improving art students' perception ability and rational behavior judgment ability, Continuously improve the effectiveness of teaching.

### 3. Application of Expressive Art Therapy in College Students' Mental Health Education Curriculum

#### 3.1 Based on the Requirements of the Syllabus of College Students' Mental Health Education Course, the Teaching Objectives and Teaching Methods of Expressive Art Therapy in the Mental Health Course are Determined

According to the requirements of the Ministry of Education on the teaching standard of "mental health of college students" for undergraduates in colleges and universities and the specific situation of our school, the total class hours of "Mental Health Education for College Students" are 32, including 24 theoretical classes and 8 practical classes. Through psychological evaluation, psychological consultation, literature review and interviews with teachers and students, artistic expression therapy is integrated into the teaching content module to promote the realization of classroom teaching objectives. See Table 1 for detailed course objectives, teaching contents and teaching methods.

Table 1: Structural Design of Expressive Art Therapy in Mental Health Course for Art Students.

Teaching content module	Supporting course objectives	Expressive Art Therapy Mental Health Course	
		teaching devices	Teaching objectives
Self-consciousness, personality psychology and personality shaping	Course objective 2 Course objective 3	Painting therapy	Discover and explore yourself
Emotion management, stress management and frustration coping	Course objective 2 Course objective 3	Music therapy+pottery therapy	Soothing and regulating emotions
Interpersonal communication	Course objective 2 Course objective 3	Psychological scenario study	Expression, empathy and cooperation
Love and sexual psychology	Course objective 2	sand therapy	Release pressure and integrate experience
Life education and coping with psychological crisis	Course objective 2 Course objective 3	OH card+painting therapy	Discover the subconscious

Note: See the syllabus for course objectives

#### 3.2 Exploration and Practice of Expressive Art Therapy in the Mental Health Course of art Students

Based on the experience of mental health course education, teaching and activities, this paper integrates and refines the common features of teaching methods, teaching objectives, teaching strategies, and teaching processes, and tries to carry out the teaching exploration and practice of the mental health education course for art students through the five step teaching paradigm of "two bodies and three hearts". The specific design process is shown in Figure 2, including the following five modules:

### 3.2.1 Warm up

Ice breaking activities before entering the state are indispensable. Ice breaking activities in the warm field can help students quickly eliminate the sense of strangeness, quickly bring them into the classroom situation, and enable them to enter the learning state in a relaxed, happy and receptive psychological atmosphere.[5] "Game ice breaking method" and "emotional infection method" are two commonly used methods, which have a good introduction effect for the expressive art therapy psychological classroom.

### 3.2.2 Create with Heart

"Creation" is the main content after students enter the learning state. After teaching the knowledge points, the teacher puts forward specific requirements, and the students carry out creative activities such as painting, sand table game, pottery making or OH card according to the requirements. In combination with the characteristics of the creation situation, it can play soothing light music or passionate fast music to create a psychological atmosphere that matches the activities, so that students can seriously create and feel.[6] The methods in the stage of "hard work" include "personal creation", "group creation" and "cross creation"

### 3.2.3 Express Your Mind and Discuss

The creation process itself is a reproduction of life experience, including individual projection and expectation of the past, present and future.[7] After the creation is completed, emotional expression, cognitive deconstruction and meaning association will occur to the works. For the creators, it is also important to maintain the inner balance, identify with the feelings of peers and form empathy, which is an important link for the expressive art therapy to play its role. After students observe, comprehend and reflect on their own works, they are encouraged to open their hearts to communicate and clarify, and discuss each other's ideas and feelings. The methods in the stage of "emotional discussion" include "teacher-student discussion method", "student discussion method" and "advanced discussion method", etc.

### 3.2.4 Meditate and Reflect

If creation is a kind of beginning that works according to one's heart, then deep thinking of the work is a continuation of creation that moves with one's heart. After the works have been freely created, self-explained and interpreted by others, the creators themselves will often have a new understanding of their own works, and will have a different dimension and depth of understanding and understanding of themselves. This is a process of meditation and reflection, and a process of understanding your own inner activities. The methods in the stage of "meditation and reflection" include "work reconstruction method" and "reflective cognitive method".

### 3.2.5 Embodied Practice

The knowledge, feelings and ideas acquired in the classroom need to be analyzed, understood and strengthened through concrete practice. The theory must pass the practice experience link, can finally form the individual unique cognition and the behavior pattern. After the previous "lyric discussion" and "meditation reflection", the students will have a better understanding of their own inherent cognition, attribution, habitual behavior, emotional characteristics, etc. Most people hope they can accept themselves and become better, and they will try to make changes. The driving force of this change requires students to constantly try and practice in real life, so as to form new cognitive and behavioral models and enhance the core quality of "positive psychology". The

methods of "embodied practice" stage include "life feedback method" and "role play method".

The curriculum paradigm of "two bodies and three minds" includes five modules: warm-up, creation, discussion, reflection and practice. They may not be used and presented at the same time in the classroom, but can be flexibly used according to the teaching content and objectives.[8] Among them, the two links of "creation with heart" and "discussion with heart" should be the most effective to mobilize students' awareness of participation.[9] Teachers need to observe students' reactions keenly and guide students to experience and discuss rationally. In the links of "meditation and reflection" and "embodied practice", we should try every way to make students become the masters of their own learning, and be able to learn from real life outside the classroom.

### 3.3 Evaluation, Reflection and Improvement of Expressive Art Therapy in Mental Health Course for Art Students

After incorporating expressive art therapy into course teaching, course quality evaluation is conducted through questionnaire surveys, student self-evaluation, student mutual evaluation, teacher evaluation, teacher team evaluation, and other methods to understand students' perception and acquisition of the course during the execution process. Teachers perceive key points, experiences, confusion, and shortcomings in teaching, reflect on positive and negative factors in the execution process, adjust the next step of work plan, improve teaching design and practical activities, and continuously improve teaching quality and effectiveness[10].

## 4. Conclusion

Art is the most natural and effective expression of human beings, and it is also the expression of spirit, emotion, cognition and soul. Therefore, expressive art therapy has a strong psychological function. It integrates art education and psychological education, and applies it scientifically to the mental health education classroom of art students. It not only expands and enriches the school's psychological education resources, enhances and expands the educational effect, but also provides a new educational concept and perspective for the school to carry out mental health education, which is worthy of research and practice.

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