

Heartful Harmony: An Art Centered Approach for Improvement of the Overall Well-Being

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ACComPLISHED Community Health Program

Objectives

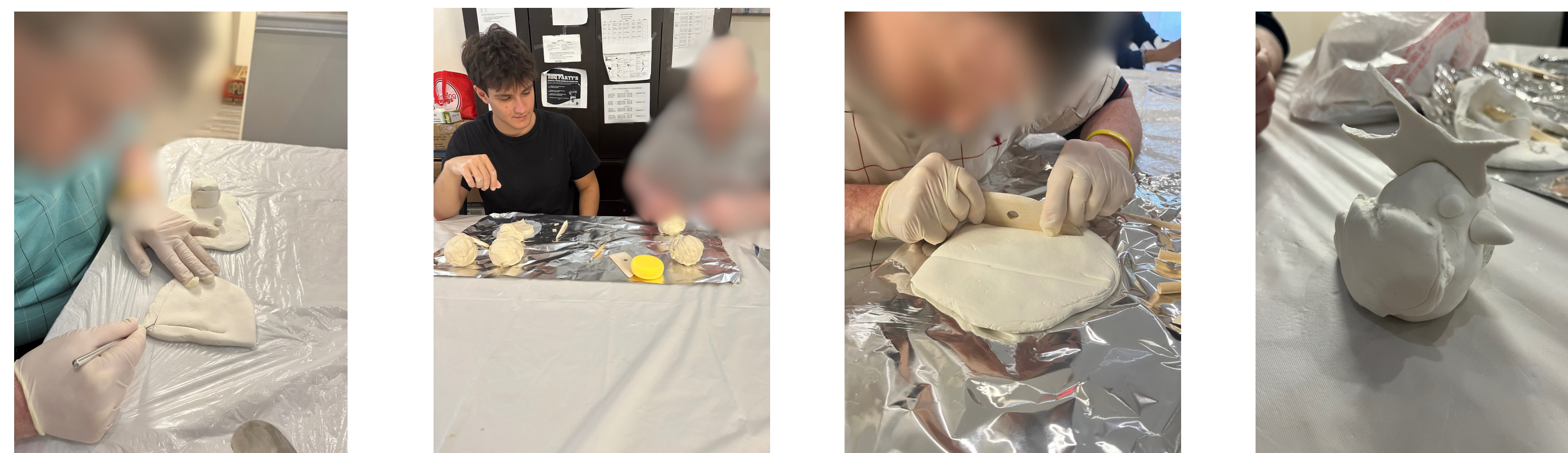
1. Provide an effective coping mechanism to manage stress, health issues and provide an outlet that can help express complex feelings and emotions.
2. Explore its methods and collect data to show the program's effectiveness quantitatively.
3. The program aims to help individuals improve physical and emotional well-being through art and ceramics medium. Art can help express complex feelings and emotions that otherwise may be difficult to express verbally.

Methods

1. Workshops have been and will continue to be conducted in individual and group settings through the ongoing collaboration with the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, one of the largest nonprofit mental health and social service agencies in the U.S., and New York State's largest social services nonprofit. During workshops adults engage in artistic and creative activities through various art modalities, specifically clay making and ceramics.
2. The goal is to collect a statistically significant amount of data for analysis and interpretation through observations and short pre and post session surveys involving Likert attitude scales. A narrative reflection is also included at the end of each session.
3. An inductive thematic analysis will be conducted to assess themes in participant reflections post workshops.
4. The program's first in-person session debuted in June. Since the start, I conducted a twice a week group sessions.

Background and Workshop Detail

1. Historically, art making, and folk medicine were used to "heal the soul" through meditation, shamanic guidance and are still widely practiced in native cultures.
2. Neuroscience behind art therapy shows that sensory explorations in art making are directly linked to positive changes in the brain.
3. As defined by the British Association of Art Therapists, art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication.
4. Art therapy is commonly used for cancer, depression and anxiety, autism, dementia, and cognitive impairment, as these patients are often reluctant to express themselves in words.
5. Most often, art therapy could strengthen a patient's emotional expression, improve self-esteem, and self-awareness. Studies have shown that it can reduce suffering from mental symptoms.
6. Art therapy has also been adopted in other applications such as an auxiliary tool for diagnosing diseases to help medical specialists obtain complementary information different from conventional tests. In my research, I wanted to further explore the healing properties of art making.



Health Liaison

1. The program provided me with an introduction on many important health topics and an outlet to further develop my art therapy research project.
2. Throughout the program, blood pressure, diabetes, and nutritional health topics have been very impactful for my family and I, as we were able to actively learn and make changes in our daily lives. Through eating healthier, I have noticed improvements in my mood and energy throughout the day, which has enabled me to be more productive and effective in school and extracurricular activities. The same results have been reported from my family members and friends who also improved their lifestyles.
3. The program also provided me with resources and access to medical professionals who are involved in art therapy studies, where I was mentored and guided to improve my overall plan and research goals.

1. During each workshop, participants have two options: a self guided art making or following a guided art session, if a participant feels that they need more help in self-expression.
2. The guided sessions will include making simple but positive and familiar images that participants can easily replicate on their own or with little help. Various examples of work made so far include cups, hearts, houses, apples and cars.
3. In addition, some sessions may also include a guided group art projects, to measure whether collective art making is more effective vs. individual approach.
4. A short survey was designed to measure the effects on the overall comfort and well-being of pre and post workshops.

Conclusion

This is an ongoing research project and the results once I collect significant amount of data. However, I noticed few promising results: my mostly non-verbal participants became more open and communicative. They are excited to do more, express themselves with confidence and look forward to their next session.

Personal Takeaway

1. The program helped me gain a deeper understanding of medicine, which I can incorporate into my research and further studies to help improve people's lives.
2. Also, it helped me better understand how to interact with patients, ask proper diagnostic questions, and conduct quantitative studies.

References

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