



THE "CREATION AXIS" IN EXPRESSIVE THERAPIES

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The process of artistic creativity performed in psychotherapy is similar to any other artistic work. Based on this assumption, this article presents a way of examining the process of artistic creativity in therapy. The process of creativity, here described as the "creation axis," is based on the clinical observation of clients in expressive therapy. By chronologically investigating the formation of the creation axis, one is able to learn its characteristics. The axis might be expressed in plastic, movement, musical, literary, dramatic or intermodal modalities.

In expressive therapy, the therapeutic experience takes place in a dynamic space created between the angles of a triad: the artist (the client), the observer/helper (the therapist) and the "art product." In plastic art therapy, a fragment of an art product is defined as any part or stage of a painting, a sculpture, sketch or scribble produced by the client. In movement therapy, a fragment of art product is considered as any voluntary or involuntary movement or flow of movements made by the client. In music therapy, a fragment of art product is considered as any sound or instrumental sound or voice made by the client, and in the dramatic therapies a fragment of art product is considered as performance or staging of scenes with which the client is involved.

The moment clients enter the clinic they move along the creation axis and their behavior, reactions, activities and attitudes characterize this axis. The therapist's role, behavior or intervention does not change along the creation axis. One may feel comfortable accompanying the client in the usual way.

The creation axis enriches the therapist's understanding of the unfolding creative process displayed in the session. The creation axis consists of six stages (defined later-on) which constitute an ongoing developmental axis. The six stages are: (1) contact, (2) organization, (3) improvisation, (4) central theme, (5) elaboration (variation) and (6) preservation. As the creation axis is developmental, one has to pay attention to its stages. Generally speaking, one may see the first three stages (1, 2, 3) of the axis as an organizational plane and the last three stages of the axis (4, 5, 6) as a symbolic plane concerned with contents. The organizational plane predominantly expresses the client's cognitive, motor and organizational powers. Should therapists decide to be active, they would take the position of helper, guide and teacher. On the content-symbolic plane, psychological powers, imagination, aesthetics and the themes of the client are predominantly expressed and, during these stages, therapists witness the experience or sometimes are participant observers. Therapists are challenged to understand these stages. They are expected to understand the reason for the location of the stages on the artistic continuity, to note partial or entire absence of one of them and to accompany their emotional dynamic.

These operational distinctions will be elaborated below. At this starting point let us heed that by having the creation axis in mind, the therapist possesses four capabilities: (1) An ability to reconstruct, follow and report about the artistic/therapeutic process, (2) obtain clinical information about the client, (3) understand

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