



# An Exploration of the Application Path of Painting Art Therapy in Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** Painting art therapy integrates painting art theory and psychological analysis, it constantly improves and develops, the application prospects is considerable. Based on the connotation and characteristics of painting art therapy, this paper pays attention to the current situation of mental health education in colleges and universities, and combines the advantages of painting art therapy to explore the integration of painting art therapy into mental health education in colleges and universities: painting is used to project the inner world in psychological survey, painting is used to release signals for help in individual counseling, painting is used to create an expression atmosphere in classroom teaching, and painting is used to awaken emotional resonance in group counseling and theme activities.

**Keywords:** painting art therapy; mental health education; university

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## 1. Introduction

Painting art therapy is a kind of expressive art therapy, the application prospect is objective. At present, mental health education in colleges and universities is developing continuously. This study tries to apply painting art therapy in psychological survey, individual consultation, classroom teaching, group tutoring and themed activities in college mental health education, and give full play to the advantages of painting art therapy to encourage concrete expression, liberal expression and aesthetic expression.

## 2. The concept and characteristics of painting art therapy

Painting art therapy integrates painting with clinical psychology and is a creative application of the relationship between art and mind. [1] Painting art therapy, which originated in Europe and the United States, has been gradually promoted in China's education and clinical fields.

In painting art therapy, participants use brushes to create on paper, visualize inner activities and self-feelings, and express them in the form of works, so as to find self-balance, integrate life experience and deepen self-cognition. Painting art therapy does not evaluate the quality of the works, but emphasizes and attaches importance to the creators, and individuals grow through self-awareness, self-understanding and understanding. It can be seen that painting art therapy is not only the practice of art, but also the art of practice. As one of the ways of expressive art therapy, painting art therapy is convenient and simple to operate, and is not limited by age, gender, painting level, nor by time and place. The expressive, symbolic and value-neutral characteristics of painting creation break through the limitations of psychological defense mechanism, express deeper motivations, emotions, anxiety, values, etc., and release repressed bad emotions to achieve a virtuous cycle of psychological mechanism. [2]

## 3. The application advantages of painting art therapy in college mental health education

### 3.1 Current situation of mental health education in colleges and universities

The target group of mental health education in colleges and universities is college students, who are gradually transitioning from adolescence to maturity. Their values are still unstable, their physical and mental development is unbalanced, and their psychological development is in a period of change. Post-00s college students have a relatively abundant material life, and they are more in pursuit of spiritual world enrichment and self-development. In the process of development, the common problems of college students include academic anxiety, emotional control, interpersonal relations and family relations, etc. Some students even take extreme behaviors and disregard life because of exciting events.

In the university stage, students are in the period of ideological values, but also the period of psychological maturity.

When dealing with problems such as academic confusion, employment choice and interpersonal relationship in real life, students often have limited thinking, cognitive bias, and fall into the crux of the problem. In recent years, the number of psychological problems and the degree of complexity has increased, and social cognition has gradually accepted the existence and emergence of psychological problems, but there are still labeled psychological problems. At present, the work of mental health education in colleges and universities has a wide range of tasks. The integration of painting art therapy into the existing work system can give full play to the incomparable advantages of speech therapy.

### **3.2 Advantages of painting art therapy**

Painting art therapy encourages figurative expression and helps in emotional awareness and emotional resolution. The process of painting itself is the direct presentation of images, which can directly express feelings beyond language. [3] Participants use paintbrush expression to build a channel between the internal world and the external world in the form of art. And it is presented in the form of painting in a more concealed and safe way, releasing negative sexual energy in emotions and achieving self-balance and stability.

Painting art therapy encourages free expression and contributes to self-awareness and self-improvement. In a safe and trusted environment, creators use brushes to express themselves freely and are not restricted by creative rules and creative techniques. In the unconscious natural revelation, the creator fully expresses the traumatic experience in the growth experience, releases the deep-level repression and conflict, reconstructs the inner and shows the neglected feelings and desires.

Painting art therapy encourages aesthetical expression and contributes to creative thinking and aesthetic enhancement. The creation of beauty in the works directly brings the enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure, while the creation of pain focuses on the contradictions, conflicts and imbalances in life experience. The creator calls on multiple senses such as eyes, ears and hands, through the brain's information reception and output, calls on vision, hearing and touch, and even smell and taste, displays creative artistic beauty, and reshapes positive self-experience.

## **4. The path of integrating painting art therapy into college mental health education**

### **4.1 Psychological survey: Projecting the inner world with painting**

Experiments in physiology and psychology have confirmed that psychological functions such as painting and emotion are controlled by the right hemisphere and are carried out by visual perception, and painting art activities can affect and treat patients' emotional disorders. [4] Painting art therapy has developed from the early application of special groups such as autism, depression, autism and hysteria to a wide audience. Through the representation function of painting symbols, it can express the inner world that cannot be expressed in words, vent the traumatic experience and emotional experience that cannot be described in words, and express one's inner emotions, conflicts and desires. And strive to transform into a constructive force. Compared with the concealness of psychological questionnaire survey, mature psychological analysis test experiments such as House-Tree-Person Test and Rain Person Test are more likely to break students' avoidance psychology and high defense psychology, and more truly reflect students' psychological state, which can be used as an effective method to find and identify students. Help to understand and master students' mental state and cognitive situation.

### **4.2 Individual consultation: Drawing to release the help signal**

In individual consultation, consultants communicate in the form of paintings to establish the trust relationship between the client and the consultant, quickly find the client's personal characteristics in scientific analysis, understand the past story in a small incision, and establish a buffer zone of emotional links. In the consultation process, the consultant can tailor the painting theme according to the specific client and specific guidelines, and the painting analysis can be used as an effective psychological test and treatment method. For example, counselors create situations for students and clients, guide and encourage them to face psychological pressure and emotional problems in the form of painting, enhance self-cognition and self-awareness, cope with traumatic experiences and stressful environments and scientifically adjust. The colors, symbols, lines and composition of the paintings contain information, release the unconscious part of the participants, create a relatively safe environment with low resistance, avoid stimulating the psychological defense mechanism of the visitors, encourage the visitors to express their emotions and feelings, and solve the internal conflicts of the individuals.

### **4.3 Classroom teaching: Creating an expressive atmosphere with painting**

In the process of classroom teaching, psychology teachers break through the traditional teaching and learning of classroom knowledge, break the single teaching form of podium knowledge, combine fun painting and game with psychology knowledge teaching, create a student-centered participatory class, shape students' perception and expression

ability, lead class students to pay attention to the change of subject feelings, and express their hearts through artistic means. Create classroom self-aware experience, encourage students to self-discover problems, and spontaneously adjust the state, operability, universality and practicality. In the classroom, classic tests and interactive games of painting art therapy can be selected to encourage interest in psychological knowledge, so as to conduct self-awareness and self-feeling. For example, self-portrait in painting psychotherapy can help students to understand themselves from the subconscious level, to understand their gender role cognition, to understand their own action. [5]

#### **4.4 Group tutoring and themed activities: Drawing to arouse emotional resonance**

In group activities, individuals engage in creative expression and imagination mining, examining their own sensory experience, symbolic expression, emotional expression, cognitive development and social connection. In group counseling, groups connect in the form of painting in an agreed safe, trusted and confidential environment, conduct self-discovery, and experience respect, support and positive social relationships in group sharing; In the theme activities, painting links are designed, such as musical psychological painting to mobilize the auditory senses and emotional creation, enjoy the pleasure of artistic creation in the process of painting creation, and directly express individual emotions and feelings by artistic means, seek the commonality of problems and emotional resonance in the group, draw strength from the group and enhance the sociality of participants, and seek to solve the internal conflicts of individuals.

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