

## Psychosocial therapies for psychoses and bipolar disorders

### ART THERAPY

Art therapy or gestalt therapy procedures represent separate psychotherapeutic methods and are based on deep psychological or psychoanalytical principles. The therapies involve working with different forms of expression. This includes pantomime and therapy elements from psychodrama, in addition to drawing, painting and modelling.

Prior to the 19th century, people with psychological illnesses were usually incarcerated or kept out of society. Thereafter, an attempt was made to focus on the requirements of the patients. The mental hospitals of the day provided patients with the opportunity to occupy themselves in a creative manner. These activities were performed from a therapeutic point of view. One hundred years later, patients were encouraged to express themselves musically to shed light on diagnostic questions. Patients had the opportunity to engage in creative activities in so-called painting studios (primarily painting, shaping, drawing and later sculpting as well). At the same time that these developments were taking place, Freud formulated his psychoanalytic theories. His ideas of unconscious psychological content and the methods of free association have greatly influenced art therapy to the present day. Art therapy concepts developed around 1940, and drew on the work of S. Freud, C.G. Jung and A. Adler. The leaders in the field of art therapy were E. Kramer and M. Naumburg. The fundamental assumption of art therapy is that access to unconscious, internal processes is facilitated through the process of creating art (e.g. a picture). Up till now, these unconscious aspects were inaccessible. Hidden stresses or feelings, or an individual's strengths or weaknesses could not be expressed previously. The expression of art normally occurs without specifying a theme. The question as to what is significant depends on the patient's verbalisations, his associations to the image and his value system, as well as the perceptions of the therapist in relation to the patient, his artwork and his own experience.

Art therapy has been shown to be particularly successful in patients where access to a psychological problem area by means of spoken communication is difficult. In addition to this update and knowledge of conflicts, art therapy leads to a reinforcement of feelings of self-worth and promotes social interaction, and trains concentration and stamina. As a result, its application is not limited to specific illnesses only. Gestalt/art therapy has an important role in everyday in-patient psychiatric treatment and in psychosomatic clinics. This therapy is often used in combination with other treatment methods (with other theoretical bases). Art therapy is also popular in the out-patient environment, where it is currently used in areas outside of the treatment of psychological illnesses (e.g. for promoting personality development).