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CHOREOTHERAPY AS A CREATIVE METHOD OF SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSON EXPERIENCING TRAUMA

CHOREOTERAPIA JAKO TWÓRCZA METODA WSPOMAGAJĄCA ROZWÓJ CZŁOWIEKA DOŚWIADCZAJĄCEGO TRAUMY

Abstract: Dance, as a human's product, is their unique body and soul language that enrolls into the original culture of a given society. The dancer's movement reflects the human nature in a very distinctive manner, allowing it to show its individual face. Through dance, an individual is able to participate in educational experiences, which is particularly useful for therapy. Dance is an original and creative instrument that opens people's souls and bodies to the beauty of musical movement. The aim of choreotherapy is to restore the overall functioning of the physical, mental, and emotional systems of individuals who are in good health, but also have deficiencies, disabilities, or experience trauma. It is an original and creative method of releasing a permanent psychomotor tension. The body that is an inflection of a man's inside is the starting point for the therapy. The interaction with another person, the individual movements of participants, expression and improvisation to the beat of the music not only support positive communication and social relations, but also awareness of one's own body and the occurring, often unconscious, difficult emotions. These also liberates one's own creativity and freedom of use and interpretation of musical work.

Keywords: choreotherapy, dance, movement, music, creativity, creation, method development, trauma, therapy

Abstrakt: Taniec jako wytwór człowieka stanowi jego swoistą mowę ciała i duszy, wpisując się w oryginalną kulturę danego społeczeństwa. Ruch wydobyty w tańcu w niezwykle charakterystyczny sposób odzwierciedla ludzką naturę, pozwalając na ukazanie jej indywidualnego oblicza. Poprzez taniec jednostka może doświadczyć kształcących przeżyć, co jest szczególnie wykorzystywane w terapii. Taniec stanowi oryginalny i kreatywny instrument otwierający duszę i ciało człowieka na piękno ruchu w muzyce. Celem choreoterapii jest przede wszystkim przywrócenie ogólnej sprawności fizycznej, psychicznej i emocjonalnej, zarówno jednostek zdrowych, jak i z deficytami, niepełnosprawnościami, czy doświadczających traumy. To oryginalna i niezwykle twórcza metoda odreagowania napięcia psychoruchowego. Ciało będąc fizyczne odbiciem wnętrza człowieka, stanowi punkt wyjścia do pracy terapeutycznej. Kontakt z drugą osobą, indywidualny ruch uczestników, ekspresja i improwizacja w rytm muzyki sprzyjają zarówno pozytywnym relacjom społecznym, jak i komunikacji, świadomości własnego ciała i przeżywanych, często nieuświadomionych, trudnych emocji, a także wyzwoleniu własnej twórczości, wolności odbioru i interpretacji muzycznego dzieła.

Słowa kluczowe: choreoterapia, taniec, ruch, muzyka, kreatywność, twórczość, rozwój, metoda, trauma, terapia

Introduction

The dancer's movement reflects the human nature in a very distinctive manner, allowing it to show its individual face. Through dance, an individual is able to participate in educational experiences, which is particularly useful for therapy. The aim of choreotherapy is to restore the overall functioning of the physical, mental, and emotional systems of individuals who are in good health, but also have deficiencies, disabilities, or experience trauma. It is an original and creative method of releasing a permanent psychomotor tension. The interaction with another person, the individual movements of participants, expression and improvisation to the beat of the music not only support positive communication and social relations, but also awareness of one's own body and the occurring, often unconscious, difficult emotions.

The role of choreotherapy in human development

Dance has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis over the years. However, it is still an important element of culture. It leads to the knowledge and realization of extremely educational experiences, and is also used in treatment due to its therapeutic properties. Regardless of the form it takes, it is an extraordinary instrument that shapes human sensitivity to the beauty of movement in music, and also increases awareness of one's own body and creativity in the way of receiving and expressing a musical work.

Movement, which is the basic material of dance and the fundamental state of an individual's life, has many meanings: adaptive, intrapsychic, interpersonal, thus creating the opportunity to explore the world and integrate with another person (Koziełło, 1997).

The term choreotherapy (Greek *choreia* – dance, *therapeuein* – to heal) comes from a wide range of activities defined by the common name of art therapy, the task of which is to use various artistic means to facilitate the expression of emotions by an individual. It is therapy through art, in which the created work is not obliged to correspond to specific aesthetic canons. The aim of therapy through art is the expression of feelings, positive changes in behaviour and attitudes towards oneself and others (Gładyszewska-Cylulko, 2011). Choreotherapy is defined as a multi-range and multi-dimensional therapy. It affects the emotional, motor, physiological, cognitive, volitional, aesthetic and erotic spheres as well as the sphere of interpersonal contacts of an individual who can express their inner feelings in a non-verbal way (Aleszko, 1989; Kuźmińska, 2002). The American Dance Therapy Association emphasizes that choreotherapy is the therapeutic use of movement as a process in which emotional and physical integration is strengthened. Dance therapy is addressed to individuals who require special treatments due to behavioural, learning, perception or somatic disorders. Choreotherapy is implemented as treatment, rehabilitation and education for people who are emotionally disturbed, physically disabled, neurologically disabled, socially excluded (Koziełło, 1997), as well as experiencing traumatic experiences.

Choreotherapy, being a form of therapy with the use of dance, is developing dynamically nowadays and is addressed to various groups of recipients. It is a specific form of both rehabilitation and recreation for many people. Dance mobilizes every sphere of a person to action. It allows the individual to discover and become aware of hitherto unknown emotions, often suppressed in a situation of experiencing trauma, and also strengthens positive human behaviour. Dance, based on body expression and improvisation of movements, is

the starting point for therapeutic work. The human body is a physical reflection of its interior, and therefore often particularly difficult emotions, experienced e.g. in a trauma situation. Choreotherapy serves psychosomatic integration. Its action is aimed at reducing stress and helping to unblock tensions and regain balance by bringing out emotions through movement and rhythm that an individual cannot express verbally. Dance and movement psychotherapy is a comprehensive psychotherapeutic method that combines the theory and practice of psychotherapy with the knowledge of movement. Choreotherapy is a therapeutic dance that complements health prevention. Both trends are based on the assumption that the body and mind form one whole, and since movement reflects the individual emotional state of an individual, changes in movement correlate with changes in the psyche (Grzesiuk, Suszek, 2012).

The structure of the choreotherapy process

The choreotherapy process is an action aimed at helping the individual regain his psychophysical and emotional balance. It also helps her rationally perceive her body, discover movement possibilities and develop self-awareness and creativity. The role of the specialist in this process is to participate in the dance together with the patient, reflecting his feelings through movement exchange, reacting and responding to the need for movement and supporting its development, as well as shaping non-verbal communication – body language (Konieczna, 2003).

The choreotherapy process takes place in three phases. In the first one, a man initiates an evident action presented by movement in the dance. The therapist stimulates his awareness, thus helping him discover his own non-verbal behaviour. The main goal of this phase is to free the patient from fear of his own conflicts and fears conditioned by fears and inability to express his own feelings. Very often, fear is coupled with a person's emotional experiences, and dance enables them to face their inner fears on a conscious level. In the second phase – the middle one, the patient may face previously unconscious internal experiences and conflicts and suppressed emotions. The joint work of the therapist and the patient is based on obtaining a state of consciousness by him, as well as the maximum reconstruction of his potentials. The individual has insight into internal emotions, and this in turn determines the transition to the next stage of therapy. The third, final phase is a characteristic summary, an analysis of previous experiences. The patient understands his body through movement improvisation, interprets the emotions and behaviours associated with it and

discovers himself anew. He perceives hitherto unknown phenomena and experiences a new quality of life. It is a process of connecting the unconscious with the present and the future (Koziełło, 1999).

Dance – a creative method of work with trauma

Dance, being a systematized form of movement, is the oldest, primary form of human activity. In modern society, it can be particularly noticed that verbalization of feelings is usually less available than releasing emotions through movement (Marcinów, 2022).

The choreotherapeutic process affects the patients' physicality and psyche, thus enabling them to work on their emotions and shape self-knowledge and self-development. Movement expression in dance therapy supports people suffering from both mental illnesses, including various types of trauma, and emotional ailments. Participating in dance also promotes the unity of the human personality, because the basic essence of choreotherapy is to develop the unity of the human body and mind (Palec, 1998). Dance and movement therapy brings the best results in people whose mental problems are reflected in the body or who have experienced trauma affecting the body (Marcinów, 2022).

Trauma is often confused with a difficult experience with serious consequences. Psychoanalyst R. Barwinski Föh emphasizes that psychological trauma is both a violent event that threatens life or health, as well as a subjective way of experiencing it. The researcher indicates that the long-term effects of trauma lead to trauma-related disorders, including the breakdown of previously applicable adaptation and defense strategies in response to stress. Only when all the individual's ways of coping with stress fail can we talk about a traumatic event or experience (Schier, Klimek, 2022).

Trauma may concern violence by a group of people against others, or it may only be of an individual nature – it is associated with circumstances in which an individual is faced with physical or mental violence, as well as when he or she experiences a sudden loss (Janusz, 2015).

Conclusion

Therapeutic dance is a relatively new field and plays an important role in human life through its multi-faceted impact and wide range of applications. The aim of choreotherapy is to free the individual from stress and difficult emotions,

develop their awareness and body identity, and thus improve the quality of life. Dancing helps restore and maintain health and mobility, as well as improves interpersonal relationships and the ability to be and find oneself in a group, helps get rid of complexes, open up to the world, but also gain confidence, trust and accept yourself. The variety of dance forms makes it easier to conduct therapeutic dance in all age groups. If a traumatized patient receives good support, his or her thinking about himself and the world changes, he moves from the position of a victim through the position of a survivor to the position of a reborn, creative person focused on development and growth.

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