

Art Therapy: A Powerful Lever for Recovery with Depression, Stroke and Hemiplegia

Irina Katz-Mazilu*

University of Paris, France.

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ABSTRACT

This abstract presents a case of depression, stroke and hemiplegia successfully treated by art therapy. The patient is an old lady who used to draw and paint as an amateur. Her mental health declined after the loss of her son. She stopped painting, reading, speaking. Aged 95, Paulette presented symptoms of cognitive regression but was still able to walk, to speak, to paint. In her early art therapy work she mostly expressed pain and sadness. After several months her mood got much better. Then Paulette had a stroke, got hemiplegic, the left side of her body was paralyzed. Her art work showed the loss of the left-side vision. After one year she progressed and was able again to use the whole painting surface. She also used again her left hand and walked with a stick. She partially recovered her verbal abilities. Two years later she had a second stroke which left her more invalidated. The same symptoms reappeared and we restarted the process. The recovery was longer and less complete but still painting and drawing made Paulette happy. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic interfered and she had to lay in bed for months because of the reduced number of her care helpers. After the lock-down, she sat in her wheelchair facing the TV, apathic and sad. Obviously, the prolonged lack of stimulation induced depression and regression. Nevertheless, after a while Paulette slightly smiled in my direction. This case shows the efficiency of art therapy with depression, brain stroke, hemiplegia and dementia. An important point is that she had no medication-the art therapy was her single treatment. The specificity of art therapy is to provide physical/emotional brain effects via art making, to reconnect the patient with his/her inner self, life history and imagination, as well as with social skills.

Keywords: Mental health, Coronavirus, Hemiplegic, Brain stroke, Pandemic, Depression, Social skills

Corresponding author: Irina Katz-Mazilu, University of Paris, France, E-mail: irina.katzmazilu@gmail.com

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