Therapeutic Dance for Healing Sexual Trauma: A systematic review

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Learning Objective

• To review the existing literature on the effectiveness of therapeutic dance in the treatment of sexual trauma.

Background

• Sexual violence is a significant and profound global health concern that includes sexual abuse, sex trafficking, rape, and sexual assault.
• Sexual violence has destructive consequences on physical and mental health.
• The psychotherapeutic use of dance and movement has been increasingly recognized as a treatment modality for sexual trauma, but literature on its effectiveness has not been catalogued.

Methods

• Peer-reviewed literature published in the English language was identified using PubMed, PsyCINFO, Web of Science, Education Source-Ebsco, and Google Scholar.
• A combination of keywords related to: dance therapy, movement therapy, creative movement, sexual exploitation, sexual trauma was used.
• Study quality was assessed using the Hawker bias checklist.
• Data was systematically identified and extracted based on emergent domains.

Table 1. Therapeutic dance effects on relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Boundary formation</th>
<th>Improved interperson relationships and intimacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodill (1987)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris (2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ho (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hopper et al. (2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margolin (2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mills and Daniluk (2002)</td>
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<td>Portokaloglou (2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>van Westrhenen (2017)</td>
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Table 2. Therapeutic dance effects on affect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Improved expression of emotion</th>
<th>Improved self-awareness of emotion</th>
<th>Improved regulation of emotion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank (1997)</td>
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Table 3. Therapeutic dance effects on self

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Sense of freedom and security</th>
<th>Improved self-esteem</th>
<th>Improved body awareness and body image</th>
<th>Improved grounding</th>
<th>Positive future orientation</th>
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<tbody>
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Conclusion and Future Directions

• The emerging literature suggests that DMT is an effective therapeutic intervention for those who have experienced sexual trauma.
• Study will be disseminated in an academic journal article.
• This summary and synthesis will also be presented to our community partner, Swan Within, to further their impact in the local community.

Acknowledgements

• Bethany Myers, UCLA Biomedical Librarian, provided critical strategic support for this project.
• Our community partner, Swan Within, works tirelessly to teach therapeutic ballet for incarcerated youth exposed to sexual exploitation and violence.
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References