

Benefits of Photography in Therapy



Fearnside, L., Bereza, Matthew, & McConn, G. (2015). Using photography to foster intergenerational understanding. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 34 (2). Retrieved from:

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=36139784-9400-499e-a693-7f1187120163%40pdc-v-sessmgr01>

The Journal of Visual Literacy published a study on *using photography to foster intergenerational understanding* and the effects of photography and visual images in therapy with residents of a nursing home. This study looked at intergenerational activities to improve relations between individuals or institutions, and show how activities such as photography can be incorporated into the therapeutic relationship. This study further looked into how visual arts such as photography can help to improve empathy and visual literacy skills in students towards the elderly. Incorporating photographs into sessions with elderly patients in the nursing home showed improvements with students levels of empathy towards the patients and their experiences in life and in the nursing home setting.

Findings from this study showed an impact to students by increasing their empathy levels through the use of a visual materials, and the use of photographs were shown to be a unique and engaging way to help increase visual literacy skills. A need for further studies to explore the use of photographs as engagement outside of a class setting are needed, but this study showed that there were positive engagement effects from the use of photographs in an empathetic setting.

Tarulli, N. (1998). Using photography to enhance language and learning: a picture can encourage a thousand years. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 29. Retrieved from:

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=1fd1145f-b08b-4632-a2fb-e6d2362568ca%40sessionmgr4006>

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association published a study on *using photography to enhance language and learning: a picture can encourage a thousand words* and the benefits of utilizing cameras and photography to help foster language expression in children. This study aimed to look primarily at the benefits of photography in work with children, and the variety of projects and activities that can be used with children to help foster more active language expression throughout many ages ranges in an environment that promotes collaboration and cooperation among children. The author of this study explained seven different applications of photography in a therapeutic setting with children, which ranged from being able to connect photography with literature, using a bulletin board to foster community in a classroom, to using a targeted photo album to work with individual children.

Findings from this study showed that photography can has positive effects on work with children and helping language expression and communication skills develop. Photography can also be highly adaptable, which makes it effective for individual or group settings, and can help children

DeCoster, V. & Dickerson, J. (2014) The therapeutic use of photography in clinical social work: evidence-based best practices. *Social Work in Mental Health* Vol 12, (1).

The Social Work Department at the University of Southern Indiana published a literature review that identified the *use of photography in clinical social work and the evidence-based best practices* in mental health work. This study looked at 23 clinical interventions surrounding photography and photographs in a therapeutic setting and the use of integrated existing photos into sessions as well as using cameras and creation of photographs in sessions. Evidence from the reviewed cases showed

that the findings from the studies were sound, and showed that findings were aligned with social work values and were a creative intervention to use with clients.

Findings from these reviewed studies showed that there is high potential for photography to be used in mental health interventions successfully, and are based on theoretical foundations that are in line with social work practice. Though there is need for additional research to be done with an experimental design structure, evidence still shows that photography can be used effectively and strategically in creative intervention strategies.

Maniam, Y., Kumaran, P., et al. (2016). The journey of young people in an early psychosis program involved in participatory photography. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Vol. 79 (6), 368-375. Retrieved from: <http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/0308022615621567>

The British Journal of Occupational Therapy published a study about the experiences young people in early psychosis had while engaged in a 10-week program that used photovoice and photography exhibitions to help them learn how to tell their stories in meaningful ways and study the themes that emerged from them. The study focused on the experiences of the young people involved, and showed they often had a strong desire to educate the public on mental health issues and used their photography to work towards being accepted by other and to build relationships and connections with others. This use of photography in interventions is seen as a creative way for therapists to engage their clients in a meaningful way, while photography can help individuals in early psychosis programs find ways to rehabilitate and better understand themselves.

Findings from this study showed that photography can be a powerful tool for mental health professionals and clients to see past mental health stigmas and helps both parties to see what is most meaningful to a client in a non-threatening and creative way. This study showed the benefits that photography can have on the therapeutic relationship, and how photovoice work with clients in early psychosis can help clients to create meaningful conversations and in turn facilitate change.

Peterson, C. (2015). "Walkabout: looking in, looking out": a mindfulness-based art therapy program. *Art Therapy Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, Vol. 32 (2), 78-82.

The Journal of the American Art Therapy Association published a brief report on the effects of a *mindfulness-based art therapy program* that utilized digital cameras to integrate photography into mindfulness-based walks for patients with cancer and their care partners. During mindfulness-based "walkabouts", participants were asked to take pictures of items they found both pleasant and unpleasant while on their walks. Participants would then review the photographs in sessions and explored their creativity, their mindfulness and experiential awareness during the activity, and were able to take images they captured and turn them into therapeutic collages. This study operated off of research that supports the use of art therapies as therapeutic interventions with individuals, and combined the creativity and personal elements that photography can have in the art therapy arena.

Findings and participant feedback from this study showed that combining the exploration of well-being through mindfulness-based "walkabouts" with photography and creative therapeutic outlets was beneficial for patients with cancer by helping to reduce stress and helped patients to learn increased self-regulation. This study is also in line with other research on art therapy with patients with cancer, and highlights the ability of photography to be an effective art therapy approach.