BRINGING ART TO LIFE from COGNITIVE DYNAMICS

THE STORY OF LESTER POTTs and the Program of ART, STORYTELLING and RELATIONSHIPS He Inspired

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FENCES
BROTHERS FROM SAWMILLING DAYS

A life-long friendship was forged of sinews, sweat and sawdust between Lester and Albert Corder, seen here in both life and art.
LESTER AND ALBERT

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A FOUNDATION – A MISSION

Mission: To improve the quality of life of persons with cognitive disorders (such as Alzheimer’s disease) and their care partners through education, research, and support of innovative care models that promote human dignity, especially therapies employing the expressive arts and storytelling.

www.cognitivedynamics.org
CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- 2 distinct, interrelated and complimentary fields that connect arts to health (Sonke 2011)

- **Arts therapies**
  - Trained and credentialed therapists
  - Defined clinical relationship to clients, students or setting

- **Arts in healthcare**
  - Artists work as artists, not practitioners/therapists
  - Artists “in residence”

- Both work to promote the arts as health-enhancing
BRAIN BENEFITS OF ART

• Facilitates the development and preservation of visuospatial and fine motor skills
• Increases one’s ability to create abstractions and process concepts in abstract
• Helps to lessen the effects of stress on the brain
• Helps to preserve patience, sustained attention and self-regulation
• Makes connections between unrelated things and fosters communication
• Helps to navigate problems that might arise in the future
• Activates the reward (pleasure) center of the brain
• Engenders a flow state, which is associated with a sense of well-being
ART THERAPY

➢ From 1980-2013, 4 randomized controlled trials of art therapy reported clinically relevant outcomes in treating behavioral, social, cognitive, and/or emotional problems of dementia patients and/or their caregivers.

➢ Artistic engagement may improve behavioral symptoms and the quality of life in PWD.

➢ Provides safe ways to express, process, and begin to make sense of traumatic experiences, potentially turning the negative to the positive through art making.
ART THERAPY

➢ 2 small trials assessed the effects of art therapy to life outside the studio, finding diminished apathy and improved patients’ quality of life

➢ In a UK study, over 40 weeks, the art group showed improvements in physical competency, mental acuity, sociability, and calmness

➢ Meet Me at MoMA – museum art appreciation program for PWD and caregivers – compared with controls, 55% of PWD showed ↑ mood and 27% showed ↑ self esteem that lasted several days in 9 month program

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ART THERAPY

Why might it help persons living with dementia?

• Relies on **preserved abilities** rather than attempting to correct disabilities
• Provides a vehicle for **emotional expression** in people who have trouble communicating
• Can engender a state of **flow**
• Promotes **social interaction**, giving a sense of **ownership & belonging**
• Helps **overcome apathy and hopelessness** and engages the senses; draws one into the present (**mindfulness**)
BRINGING ART TO LIFE
GIVING BACK
PAYING IT FORWARD
2011 - present

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BRINGING ART TO LIFE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

• To facilitate a dignifying experience for participants & families
• To elicit/preserve life stories of persons with dementia
• To educate students on dementia, including person-centered care
• To facilitate intergenerational communication, understanding & empathy
• To showcase the life stories & artistic accomplishments of the participants for their families, care partners and communities
Credo (our foundational belief): Each person has innate value and dignity despite conditions or circumstances. Personhood is inherent and unfading, despite any inability of ours to perceive it.

#BringingArtToLife
#CultureOfCompassion
#CognitiveDynamics

@DanielCPotts
BRINGING ART TO LIFE – THE VIRTUAL DEMENTIA TOUR & EMBODIED LABS
BRINGING ART TO LIFE – ART THERAPY
(Angel C. Duncan, MA, MFT-ATR)
MINDFULNESS: BEING PRESENT

Showing up – mind, body, and spirit – engaged, actively listening, and fully attentive
FIRST PERSON ACCOUNTS OF DEMENTIA

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BRINGING ART TO LIFE

ART

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BATL student learning outcomes (Keisha Carden, Rebecca Allen, et al):

- Students completed electronic surveys measuring empathy, mindfulness, and attitudes toward older adults generally, individuals with dementia, and interest in community service.

- **Increased empathy** and **improved attitudes toward older adults and persons living with dementia** were observed.

- **Existential awareness** fosters **mindfulness** and **empathy** that subsequently facilitates change in ageist attitudes.

- **Engagement with the present moment** with other group members versus meaningful engagement with art was a more powerful predictor of intergenerational relationship building, conversations regarding purpose-and meaning-in-life, and subsequent shifts in ageist attitudes.
BATL student v other student learning outcomes (Keisha Carden, Rebecca Allen, et al):

- This project examined learning outcomes for undergraduate students enrolled in BATL, a didactic psychology of aging course, and introductory psychology courses, which vary in exposure to older adults with dementia.
- BATL students demonstrated improved attitudes toward individuals with dementia relative to students in psychology of aging or introductory psychology courses.
- Future time perspective was more open-ended in BATL students.
- These results suggest experiential learning opportunities are critical to infusing enthusiasm for intergenerational collaborations, possibly influencing students’ future career trajectories and motivating desire to work with frail older adults.
Ethnographic observation of person with dementia (PWD) outcomes in Art to Life (Candice Reel, Rebecca Allen, et al)

- Total engagements were significantly higher in **morning sessions** than in afternoon sessions
- Engagements were significantly more **verbal/social** than activity-related
- Two emergent themes within the verbal engagements were identified: **validation of personhood** and **reminiscence of family ties**
BUILDING ON SUCCESS - BRINGING ART TO LIFE CHICAGO

(w/Chicago Methodist Senior Services, Rush University & Neelum Aggarwal, MD)

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BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Bringing Art to Life Birmingham (with B-SC & McCoy Adult Daycare)
BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Crimson Community Café, w/Uperk Coffee &
The Alzheimer’s Foundation of America

CRIMSON COMMUNITY CAFE

November 16
10 TO 11:30 AM AT UPERK
LOCATION: 405 20TH AVE
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35401

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Art to Life Outreach

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