

Relaxation Techniques, Stress Management and the Reduction of Performance Anxiety for Competitive Athletes using Art Therapy

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2002

Abstract

Athletes differ from the normal population, and in that usually have more visual perceptual skills rather than verbal skills, therefore Art Therapy presents itself as a logical psychotherapy for athletes. The study gained insight into the role of imagery with athletes. The participants were given a pre and post questionnaire, in which they were asked to describe stressful experiences. The questions focused on arousal, stress, and anxiety that may accompany performance. Athletes completed the questionnaire in the first session and then participated in an art experiential. The study consisted of four sessions of art therapy done over one month's time. Each art experiential's primary goal was relaxation, with a secondary goal of more tolerance of anxiety, and coping with difficult situations. The techniques used during the research were the scribble drawing, guided imagery, visualizations, and the House- Tree-Person (HTP) assessment. The assessments of stress levels were given again, and the results were compared to see if the art therapy sessions had successfully affected the athletes stress level. The cognitive general went up indicating athletes using imagery for strategies relating to competitive events. And, although the motivational general arousal did not increase four out of the five categories based on the Sports Imagery questionnaire did in fact increased leads us to believe using imagery and art therapy with athletes is beneficial.