PART 4. APPLIED ASPECTS OF HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

DOI: 10.20333/2541-9315-2017-326-335

OPPORTUNITIES OF CREATING TEXTILE HANDICRAFTS DURING THE REHABILITATION PROCESS

S. Burneikaitė, J. Andrejeva
Klaipėda University, Klaipėda, Lithuania

O. Volkova
Krasnoyarsk State Medical University, Krasnoyarsk, Russia

Abstract

The following work presents the practice of textile techniques usage in creating handicrafts during the rehabilitation process, based on the study experience and by carrying out the subject tasks of the creative methods in class and in the positions of internship. Students’ tasks to create textile handicrafts and puppets had some aims: providing patients with an opportunity to train fine motor skills, turning their thoughts to creation, motivating them to achieve the desired result; while creating a puppet, as a spiritualized object to feel the relationship with another life, to express it and to reflect. A number of puppets created by patients correspond to the structure of a gloves puppet. These ones were recommended as a means of occupational therapy for training fine motor skills by making a gloves puppet and animating it after putting it on. The aim of the work is to present the practice of the purposeful use of textile techniques in creating handicrafts during the rehabilitation process, based on the study experience and by carrying out the subject tasks of creative methods in rehabilitation in the positions of internship.

Keywords: textile techniques, handicrafts, puppets, occupational therapy, rehabilitation, training fine motor skills, positions of internship

---

Burneikaitė Salomeja – Lecturer, Rehabilitation Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, Klaipeda university, Lithuania;
Adress: 29-9, Pusyno st., Klaipeda, Lithuania, LT – 92266; phone: +3(706)1516604;
E-mail: salomeja.burneikait@gmail.com
Relevance

Creative methods and the monitoring of their application’s efficiency occupy a prominent position in the teachers’ scientific research fields and in the study programmes of the Klaipeda University Department of Rehabilitation. It was not for the first time when the future rehabilitation specialists got acquainted and practiced the opportunities of textile techniques together with the subjects of the expressive therapy. The competence of such specialists includes the recovery of the patients’ abilities, maintenance and compensation of disorders by appropriate activity to help them live independently and by taking into account their wishes, needs and social requirements. The appropriate activity includes daily work and leisure activities. The quality of uniting or harmoniously bringing together all these activities encouraged to draw attention to the opportunities of textile techniques while training rehabilitation specialists (Rohloff, 2015; Polläinen, 2013; Tan, Liu, Li, Xie, Zhao, Luo, Jin; Meneghello, Marcassa, Koch, Sgaravatti, Piccolomini, Righetto, Orsini, 2016; Sparrow, Brennan, Mao, Ness, Rodriguez-Galindo, Wilson, & Qaddoumi, 2016).

Since ancient times textile was used for human clothing, from birth to death, i.e. from cradle to burial cloths. People used textile to create various household accessories: towels, bedspreads, curtains, tablecloths, carpets, etc. Along with practical functions, decorative/symbolic meanings, textile has also been evolving: it helped to express the status of a person, to convey aesthetic feelings, often to communicate with people through the complex system of conventional symbols (Hui, Snider, & Couture, 2016; Chien, Scanlon, Rodger, & Copley, 2014; Prokopenko, Mozheiko, & Alexeevich, 2014; Pichugina, Sumarokov, Salmina, & Higashida, 2009; Derevtsova, Nikolaev, & Prokopenko, 2009).

The word textile comes from a Latin word textilis, meaning “woven”. In terms of etymology, it is worth remembering the interface between text and textile. Hence, both words and technologies rely on the network principle, based on mutual relations. Poetic myths of the world also reflect the ritual meaning of textile, rooted already in the pre-historic mythic subconscious of humans. They are important when having in mind the overall (holistic) approach to a person and one’s life. That is especially important when helping a person to return to one’s life, restore lost functions, efficiency, and re-find the meaning of life. Here are some examples:
- The thread of life... (folk saying)
- "Mintisveja mintį..." ("Thoughts twist into an idea...") (folk saying)
- To find or loose the end of a thread... (folk saying)
- "Siūlaisiūlai, susivykit, siūlogalonepalikit..." ("Threads, threads weave together, do not leave the end of a thread...") (Lithuanian folk game)
- Penelope’s shroud... (mythology)
- Ariadne’s, Rachel’s thread ... (mythology)
- "Tu numegzk man, mama, kelią..." ("Mother, (please) knit me a path") (poetry)

The following is the evidence of the sustainable comprehensive world. As we live in a fragmented world, in the world of specializations, we are more likely to look for ways to rest, calm down and we spun into what is forgotten or old. In terms of the holistic, i.e. overall approach to a person (Greek holos means whole, entire), it is worth remembering that education, training and health promotion often occur at the same time.

It has long been known that knitting cures nerves. In fact, looking back to the toughest periods of the nation’s cultural history, it is possible to notice that during the most difficult moments of life the people often tried to find solace by carrying out minor and common activities that frequently required creativity. At times those activities were different handicrafts like knitting, crocheting, embroidery, etc. By practicing these handicrafts people acquired not only material values but objects which were made with love and dedicated to the loved ones. The experience of the folk art and people’s memories show that the creation of similar handicrafts not only enhances psychologically, but also helps to tighten interpersonal relationships, to show attention to another person in the form of material, to reveal feelings and to strengthen self-esteem. Those, who still keep and value objects like gloves knitted by one’s mother, grandmother or great grandmother, a crocheted tablecloth, a modest napkin may be an old childhood rag doll, bear witness that these objects are extremely precious and in some way spiritualized by their loved ones. Not without a reason there are language expressions like “knitted with love”, “embroidered with care”, “woven with best wishes” or a doll is “spiritualized with a childhood full of happiness”. These beloved objects are kept and passed as a precious heritage or a family relic.
The programme of the Department of Rehabilitation of KU Faculty of Health Sciences provides future occupational therapy undergraduates with such creative methods as poetry, dance and movement, drama therapies, textile techniques. Accordingly the 4th year students of the occupational therapy programme, became acquainted with the opportunities of textile techniques and tested them in practice. Some of them created their first ever handicrafts with their own hands. The most important is that students who have experienced the efficiency of textile techniques would be able to recommend their patients a targeted additional activity that helps to restore lost or damaged functions or to find the motivation to overcome the challenges of disability. After completing a course of textile techniques students had to do an independent work. When reporting students not only presented their own handicrafts created with the help of textile techniques, but also described why and which techniques, actions, materials and tools in their opinion are best for recovering after a stroke, overcoming depression, perceptual disorders, regaining strengths after bone fractures, training feeble arm muscles, fine motor skills.

In the photos presented below we can see not only examples of handicrafts created by textile techniques, but also the mood of students that reflects their joy of creating.

Figures 1-4. 4th year future occupational therapy undergraduates with their textile handicrafts in 2011-2015
In 2008-2009 the same programme was offered to part-time students in the KU Continuing Studies Institute (CSI). Future occupational therapists got acquainted with related creative activities, such as textile and puppet therapy techniques. In order to explore their efficiency, the mentioned students were offered to test the opportunities of using the following techniques while carrying out practical tasks in their positions of internship. The aim was to provide occupational therapists with an opportunity to experience the efficiency of the engagement therapy by interesting the patients with a reasonable activity by creating a textile puppet. When puppets were made patients were offered to talk to them. The goals of the activity were to find ways to motivate patients to nurse fine motor skills during interesting creative activities and to experience good emotions after achieving the result. Puppets as the creation of a spiritualized object had to help to feel the relationship with another life, to express and reflect it.

There were fourteen students in the group. Before receiving tasks, everybody attended a course of introduction to art therapy and actively participated in the course of drama therapy. During sessions students got acquainted with some of the drama structures, discovered how to rely on the elements of drama therapy in communicating with people with emotional problems and various and complex disabilities and gained initial skills. They have visited the Klaipeda puppet theatre workshop. During their practice every student had chosen a patient and in addition to regular occupational therapy procedures offered him (her) to make a puppet by using a couple of handicraft textile techniques knitting, crocheting, embroidery, sewing, felting wool. When reporting for practice, students presented descriptions of the work and monitoring with photos, as well as puppets created by the patients. Just one student out of the fourteen presented only a photo with the description of the work, explaining that the patient wanted to keep the puppet and present it to her grandchild. Others gladly presented puppets to the occupational therapists, who had helped them.

As patients had different disabilities they were offered to use different handicraft techniques to make puppets. So all created textile puppets can be divided into three groups in accordance with the purposefully chosen technologies. In order to provide puppets with expressiveness and life, they were diversified by applying details of embroidery, applique, and collage:
Five puppets out of fourteen correspond to the structure of a gloves puppet and were recommended as being suitable for nursing the palm of the hand in an occupational therapy way, by operating it as a gloves puppet and animating after putting it on.

In the descriptions of the task implementation students have noticed that they first intended to make contact with the patient and create a relationship of trust. During sessions other occupational therapy procedures were also carried out. At first a task to create a puppet appeared unusual to patients. But being involved in the work people got more motivated as they created puppets not for themselves, but for other people at their choice. Before starting to create puppets, everybody had to fulfill a number of preparatory works: collect and prepare materials, match colors, textures, forms, prepare drawings. Some of the younger patients searched for information about the structure of puppets online. A creative atmosphere was formed and the occupational therapist encouraged everybody to achieve one’s goal.

Students described in detail how they had fulfilled the task, but some of them did not indicate clearly the age of the patients. Participants were both males and females; the
youngest girl was of 15 and the oldest woman was of over 80 years old. Participants were mostly elderly people with quite diverse diagnoses: mental impairment (Down syndrome, intellectual disability), those with I-II disability groups, with not completely restored self-support and activity functions after a stroke, reduced mobility after hip fractures, complex disabilities after brain injury, some patients were diagnosed with depression. It has been noticed that being encouraged to create and producing puppets, patients relax, begin to talk to others and smile. The process provides them with good emotions, new knowledge and skills. Many pointed out that people begin to feel needed. One student has noted that after making a puppet, her patient began telling about her previous hobbies, tried “to help” the occupational therapist and got interested in her specialty. Another student, who was working with a 15-year-old girl suffering from depression, claimed that the girl created a “sad grandma” (Figure 4) that resembled her and corresponded to her own state of being. A crocheted mouse (Figure 2) was created by a woman in the society for handicapped people, who was helping others to do what was difficult for her. A 58-year-old woman, who has been living at the Care home for 10 years and has a leg disability, has carefully crocheted a white angel (Figure 2) and expressed a desire to create more puppets. A pink gloves puppet with a wide smile (Figure 4) was created by a 70-year-old woman in the presence of the student who encouraged her. The student admitted that it was a great occupational therapy. She believes that creating puppets is a perfect way of expressing feelings. During similar sessions it is possible to better understand the kind of help the patient needs and it is easier to choose the treatment. A yellow suspended puppet with a toy head (Figure 2) was crocheted by a woman after a stroke, who has been thoroughly and independently following the occupational therapist’s instructions for a long time, thus improving the functions of the fine motor skills and restoring the ability to crochet and knit. The occupational therapist has noted that a desire to achieve and implement one’s aim is of great importance during rehabilitation. A glove puppet in two contrasting colors was knitted with knitting needles (Figure 3) by a 53-year-old woman, who had loved to knit before a stroke and was now doing it again, because she knew that knitting improves coordination, trains fine motor skills and stimulates brain activity. A dark blue puppet made out of a knit
mitten (Figure 3) was created by an over 80-year-old woman, living in the Care home. She was happy to “help the occupational therapist” and told she had no dolls in childhood and had to make them herself. A puppet Kotryna (Figure 5) was created by a lonely 72-year-old patient, who had difficulties in walking after hip fracture, was not able to look after herself and thus lived at a Care home. The woman got much attached to the puppet, was thinking of new ways to decorate it and named it after her sister’s granddaughter, having decided to present the puppet to her. During the whole process this patient was especially cheerful and became more self-confident.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the students’ works during practice revealed that creation of puppets was useful while working with people with intellectual disabilities (they relax, smile and become more communicative). This activity provided patients with positive emotions, new knowledge and skills. It can be claimed that patients’ memory, imagination and fine motor skills have improved notably. This activity distracted them from the negative thoughts and allowed the patients to feel useful. When evaluating their practical work, students have noticed that the creation of puppets by applying textile techniques is a perfect way of expressing feelings. They have also indicated the importance of the patients’ positive motivation during rehabilitation for restoring lost functions and skills. It has been noticed that the creation of puppets using textile materials is a mean of occupational therapy that motivates to communicate, engages in activity, and cheers the patients up. Puppet art and creation also promote emotions, provide an opportunity for the patient to express oneself, speak out, while the occupational therapist indirectly receives information about the health condition of the patient. Creation of puppets together with patients has helped the students to learn how to make contact, better understand the patient and gain work experience.

**References**


Rohloff, J. (2015). How long must we go on like this? [Wie lange wollen wir
eigentlich noch so weitermachen? Ergotherapieausbildung 2014 - die
Beschreibung eines erstaunlichen Phänomens] *Ergotherapie Und Rehabilitation, 54*(5),

Sparrow, J., Brennan, R., Mao, S., Ness, K. K., Rodriguez-Galindo, C., Wilson, M.,
& Qaddoumi, I. (2016). Participation in an occupational therapy referral program for
children with retinoblastoma. *Journal of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine, 9*(2), 117-
124. doi:10.3233/PRM-160372

observation on acupuncture plus occupation therapy for fine motor functions in
children with spastic cerebral palsy. *Journal of Acupuncture and Tuina Science, 14*(5),
328-332. doi:10.1007/s11726-016-0944-0