

Introduction to Traditional Korean Art Materials as Therapeutic Medium

Abstract

The purpose of this workshop is to expand the multicultural competence of art therapists by (a) introducing traditional Korean art materials and (b) providing a hands-on experience of Meok and Hanji. Multicultural competence must be sought in all counseling related professions; it refers to the ability to work appropriately and thoughtfully with cultural diversity. In art therapy, multicultural competence includes the culturally sensitive perception of the arts and the utilization of art materials. Since materials reflect the culture of where they have been developed, they provide pivotal information about the community, as seen in the following cases of the traditional art materials of Korea.

Introduction to Traditional Korean Art Materials

Meok and Byeoru. Meok is an ink stick made from the ash from burning pine trees; Byeoru is an ink stone that pairs with Meok, which is mostly made of pure stones. Meok becomes liquefied when the artist repeatedly grinds it on Byeoru with water, which creates the unique variations of grey (Park, 2017). Since this time-consuming process also decides the quality of Meok, it is considered an integral part of the artistic process in Korea (Kim, 2012).

Hanji. Hanji is a traditional Korean paper, handmade from the bark of mulberry trees, which creates various thickness of the paper. Hanji breathes with the nature; accordingly, it is soft and flexible, yet strong against light, water, and wind. Hanji becomes sturdy when lacquer is applied, which can be also used for 3-dimensional clay and craft arts.

Ssal-pul: Ssal-pul is rice glue, made by boiling rice flour in the water. Ssal-pul is also applied widely as art material, as it can serve as a varnish to make Hanji sturdy or as a medium

to create unique texture when mixed with paint. Since it is made of rice, it's edible and allergy free which makes it safe for all populations.

Conclusion

Understanding materials familiar to the local community can provide important information of the local culture. Therefore, this workshop will provide a valuable opportunity (a) to explore the relations between culture and art materials and (b) to examine the therapeutic values of the aforementioned Korean traditional art materials through a hands-on experience.

References

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