

Finding time: An online art therapy group

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Abstract

Group art therapy online: can it work and does it make finding time easier? This question was addressed in the running of an eight-week online art therapy group for parents of infants and school-aged children. Using weekly art therapy directives, the group explored issues relating to parenting and the creative self. *Finding Time* was a qualitative exploratory project using a Wordpress blog as the therapeutic 'space' and the researcher as facilitator. Barriers to participation included difficulties using the technology and/or not being able to find time to log in. The majority of participants indicated this was a user-friendly and non-threatening way of engaging in group art therapy. It is concluded that there is room for further exploration of combining art therapy with online service delivery. Replica *Finding Time* blog: <http://findingtimeproject.wordpress.com>.

Keywords

Art therapist, online, art therapy group, art therapy, parenting role, group therapy, self-awareness, time

Introduction

Finding time for self-reflection can become yet another competing demand in the day-to-day juggling act experienced by many parents. In the midst of the juggling, self-reflection is a ball that often gets dropped. As a therapist and parent, my observation has been that the loss of time for self-reflection is also linked to less time engaged in creative pursuits. The potential cost of this may be diminished self-awareness and a loss of creative identity (Plantin & Daneback, 2009; Goodwin, 2010). It was this observation, combined with a decade of experience in online counselling that prompted the development of an online art therapy group as part of a Master's program research project. An online group was chosen, as opposed to a face-to-face group, for two reasons: to see whether art therapy could be successfully delivered online and to determine whether an online intervention would be a practical way of supporting time-poor parents to engage in a creative process.

Losonncz and Bortolotto (2009) suggest there may be a mismatch between parents' choices to engage in multiple roles and their actual experience of inhabiting those roles (p.125). In addition to work and family roles, the *Finding Time* project identified the role of the creative self and encouraged participants to explore the lived experience of this creative self amidst their different role demands. The potential for creative pursuits to maintain a sense of an integrated identity within the experience of multiple roles begs the question: if we don't find the time to engage in creative pursuits, do we temporarily lose the thread of who we are? One *Finding Time* participant (busy2011) wrote in the intake process: "I find that I turn to creativity when I am trying to find who I am again". The project looked at whether an accessible and flexible online intervention may be one way for those who have lost their creative thread to pick it up again and regain a greater sense of who they are within their busy, multi-tasking, multi-layered lives.