Methodology of Correction and Developing Art Therapy work with Hyperactive Children

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Abstract: The article considers the methodology of art therapy correction work with preschool-age children. The author proves the sufficient potential of the complex art-therapeutic approach to the correction work. The developed program is aimed at rehabilitation and strengthening of mental integrity of a child personality through the normalization of family relations and peers and the resolving of internal conflict. The article describes the structure of an integrated multimodal approach to the children with disabilities, the steps of each step in correction work and assesses the efficiency of art therapy that was carried out during 2010-2013.

Key words: Art therapy • Children with disabilities • Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) • Methodology • Multimodal approach

INTRODUCTION

At present, the problem of deviant development and behavior attracts high attention in modern psychology. One of the most common behavioral disorders is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Hyperactivity syndrome is one of the new types of deviant development and belongs to the hyperkinetic disorders in children. Traditionally ADHD is considered by Russian psychologists as the minimal cerebral dysfunction [1].

According to modern concepts, a hyperactivity syndrome is a combination of disorder of attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity.

The rate of children with ADHD according to various estimates is from 2% to 20%. The influence range of children with ADHD involves the members of their families, peers and teachers. This clearly occurs at the combined type of disorder. This fact has determined the importance of this study [1].

The study of individual and typological characteristics of children from different risk groups, as well as the identification of pedagogical factors that directly affect the nature and dynamics of the development allowed to develop a new direction in the modern pedagogical practice - correctional-developing teaching [1-13].

ADHD brings to the problems of the child socialization. The hyperactive children characterizes by behavioral disorders caused by general motor anxiety, difficulties in interaction with the others, violation of the public and family rules, aggressive behavior and significant difficulties in education.

The study of children with the ADHD syndrome and the development of the deficit functions are extremely important for psychological and pedagogical practice of preschool-age children. Early diagnostics and correction should be aimed at preschool-age children, when the compensatory abilities of the brain are extended and there is an ability to prevent the persistent abnormal manifestations [14].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The literature analysis of this problem has shown that the majority of studies were carried out for children of
school age, i.e. during the period, when the features of hyperactivity disorder are more distinctive and conditions of development in early and preschool age remain, generally, apart of psychological services.

Modern trends of developing and correctional work are based on the principle of replacing development. There are no programs considering multimorbidity of the problems of the child’s development with ADHD in a complex with the problems in the family, among peers, adults accompanying the child’s development and based on the multimodal approach.

Theoretical and methodological principles of psychological and pedagogical support of the children with disabilities in this paper were largely determined by the influence of fundamental studies of the local psychologists and defectologists, such as L.S. Vygotsky and G.Ya. Troshin and others.

Our study included the comprehensive diagnostic and was divided into the several stages:

- Organization and preparation;
- Development of a working hypothesis;
- Methodological;
- Experimental;
- Analytical.

At the first stage carried out during 2009-2010 included investigation of the problem, selection of the subject and objectives of study, analysis of existing literature sources and the content of psychological and pedagogic process and practical activity of the professionals working with hyperactive preschool-age children.

Innovative approaches to the use of art therapy and gaming technologies in the formation of the personality of children with behavioral disorders were also identified at this stage.

The second stage of the study (from January 2010 to May 2010), the original research concept was developed and refined, as well as a general model of this type of behavior was designed. Several working hypothesis have been developed.

At the third stage of the study (from May 2010 to August 2010) included the planning of the experimental research, determination of the goals and objectives and selection of the techniques and methodology.

At the fourth stage carried out during 2010-2013, the general diagnostics and experimental part were performed.

The fifth stage included the processing of the empirical study of material, determination of the efficiency level of art-therapeutic influence on the implementation of the emotional-volitional development of hyperactive children, identification and analyses of the changes of the psycho-emotional condition of hyperactive children during psycho-correction work, assessment of the working hypothesis, interpretation of results within the context of initial research concept and the results of the study were compared with existing concepts and theories. As the result, the obtained model of behavioral disorders was corrected and the conclusions were formulated.

General Program: The program “Journey with Fox-cub” consisting of general and additional parts was developed and tested with a focus on the individual features of the development of hyperactive children and their level of ability to work in the Center of Children’s Development “Kristall” (St. Petersburg, Russia) [15].

The program continued during 9 months and consisted of 30 meetings during and additional part consisted of 8 meetings. The additional series of the program was aimed at the successful integration of children with complex minimal cerebral dysfunction (MCD) in mini-groups by strengthening and support of the emotional links between parents and children.

Totally, 75 preschool-age children with ADHD from the Center of Children’s Development “Kristall” and Children’s Club “The Desyatoe Korolevstvo” (St. Petersburg, Russia) have been involved into the study.

Preschool-age children were mainly from full families and aged from 5 years and 10 months to 7 years and 6 months. More than 30% of children have no attended the kindergartens due to the health peculiarities.

For convenience of data delivery, these were conditionally divided into two experimental groups and one control by 25 people:

- Experimental 1 group included the children with complex reactive and active MMD participated in the art therapy;
- Experimental 2 group included the children with subnormal, asthenic and rigid MMD participated in the art therapy;
- Control group involved the children participated only in dianostic procedure.

Art therapy has been conducted for 3 years in 12 groups by four children and 2 children participated in the individual program.
Ascertaining experiment was conducted both individually and in the small groups of 3-4 children in conditions excluding the influence of the external factors.

To complete information about the peculiarities of hyperactive children, the parents were interviewed. This allowed collection of information on the health, emotional and communicative problems in children, the peculiarities of their behavior and the welfare of the family.

A diagnostic examination was conducted before beginning of the program and after. To achieve this, the specific diagnostic complex to receive the objective data about changes in the psycho-emotional conditions of preschoolers with hyperactivity and assess the mental performance during correction work was developed [16].

The developed program was used for investigation of the influence of the art therapy on the hyperactive children. The main purpose of the program is to help teachers and parents in the development of emotional-volitional behavior and personality of a child with ADHD for further successful social integration through creativity.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were formulated:

- Extend the knowledge of children about feelings, formation and development of the ability of children to recognize the emotional feelings of other people;
- Support of the open manifestation of emotions and feelings by various socially acceptable ways (verbal and creative);
- Development of arbitrariness of mental processes and self-realization;
- Reduction of emotional tension;
- Development of the personality through the adequate self-esteem and self-reliance;
- Development of communicative skills of the children in different situations with their peers and other adults;
- Development of positive motivation for learning;
- Realization of the creative potential of a child.

The general principle of the program is the involvement of participants into the active art activities through the performance of various types of creative activities that successfully corresponds to the needs, interests and capabilities of children with special educational demands [17]. The novelty of this program is aimed at the development of emotional and personal attitude through the strengthening of positive motivation and improvement of the communication skills.

**Description of the Core of the Program:** Comprehensive art therapy correction program is built of several blocks: tale therapy in the sandpit, gaming therapy, art therapy and creation of mandalas using colored sand.

In the block of the tale therapy in the sandpit, the kids travel to the Fairyland together with Fox-cub and meet the main contemplation universal archetypes-components of the life of a person – “Seasonality”, “Road”, “State”, “Creator” and “Assistant”.

Work with archetypes relieves to form the creative basic motivation in children with ADHD, reduces the anxiety and inclines to further work.

**Block of gaming therapy** consists of different spontaneous mobile exercises directed on decrease of motor activity and development of control over impulsive behavior. The exercises promote the development and activation of the development of all higher mental functions.

Mobile exercises bear the elements of lively game, create the potential for prospective work, strengthen, recover and build the interactions between different levels and aspects of mental activity in children.

**Block of the art therapy** is represented by color, music and art therapies.

In this block, the children get familiar with various fine art materials including techniques and exercises, which use is aimed at overcoming difficulties in art work by a child, stimulation of spontaneity, the development of imagination and creativity. The themes of work with materials and techniques include “Fingerprints”, “Magic wood”, “Drawing with finger paints on crumpled paper”, “What happen with the blots”, “Work with stencils”, “Sunny circle of palms” and “Scribbles”.

In the block of sand therapy, the children get familiar with the mandalas and participate in the creation of the series of works of colored sand. This block includes the lessons on the creation of sand mandalas completed with relaxation exercises and fairytale material [18].

The creation of sand mandalas involve the participants in the creative process and strengthen motivation through the range of various creative activities that are most appropriate to the interests and
abilities of children with behavioral disorders. The harmonization of the internal psychological condition and increase of the self-consciousness activate the personal resources.

Upon completion of creative work, the participants receive the opportunity to discuss their feelings and acquired experiences with the mandala and assess the results (the correction leading questions are permissible).

According to the results, the blank of art-therapeutic lesson should be filled for each child, which records the date, time, the main theme, color and graphic materials used by the participant, the statements provided by a child during the work, interaction with the teacher and other participants, attitude to work and explanations of the content of own work [16].

The following conclusions have been made after completion of the series of “Sand mandala”:

- Reduction of emotional tension and anxiety;
- Change in the color range and extension of color palette during task performance with colored sand;
- Increase of task performance time from 7 to 25 min;
- Higher attention;
- Performed images acquired the specific character – the ragged and sharp lines became more graceful;
- The character of interaction with other participants and attitude to work has changed.

Consequently, the general positive effect of the work with the mandala on the self-cognition and internal self-determination in hyperactive children was noted.

Creation of the sand mandala relieves to relax and contributes to the synthesis and organization of themselves and inner world, provides the feeling of internal control, balance and tranquility in a child with behavioral disorders. Thus, work with mandalas develops attention to own feelings, a holistic perception of the world, contributes to the development of emotional-sensory internal world and enhances the feeling of the personal values. These changes form a creative personality of a hyperactive child.

**Description of the Additional Part of the Program:** It should be noted that only a part of children with ADHD were able to engage the general part of the program and participate in a group work. To support these children, the additional series of meetings for joint activities with the parents to enable children to be easily involved into art therapy program through they have been developed [16].

The additional part of the program consisted of eight 90-min meetings. The meetings were held additionally once per week.

The children with complicated hyperactive form of ADHD (45% of the total number of participants during 2010-2013) are characterized by a lack of ability to self-control that complicated their education in a group. To teach these children work in the group along with individual work at the initial stage, the 24 families were invited to participate in additional collective art-therapeutic work.

Assistant to the families included the delicate art-therapeutic support of interaction between family members aimed at strengthening of the emotional links between parents and children [20].

This additional art-therapeutic series of meetings have been focused on:

- Perception of dysfunctional interactions;
- New experience of joint activity and empathy;
- Development and implementation of new positions and methods of interaction;
- Training of adequate expressing of feelings and conflict resolution.

Participants worked in the groups of two or three people (mother, child and father; grandmother, the child and the mother; the father and child; mother and child). Conditions of interaction in pairs strictly varied. Some methods included in the series of work were performed individually, other in the groups.

The series included following techniques:

- Creation of a mandala individually and in pairs;
- Individual photographing and positioning in the common picture, consulting of parents, the expression of feelings through creative self-expression,
- Creation of the family emblem and drawing of scribbles,
- The tales told in the sandpit.

As a result of the support of families with hyperactive children, the children with the complex form
of ADHD were able to integrate into small groups for further creative development and correction within the program “Journey with Fox-cub”.

After additional series of meetings and joint efforts, the following changes have occurred in the families with hyperactive children:

- Art therapy due to non-verbal nature enabled the families rebuild their relationships and use the alternative means of interaction. Parents felt more confidence in abilities and capabilities and become more attentive to the success of children.
- Implementation of art therapy made several previously unconscious or denied aspects of the family functions more clear and understandable. Parents have adhered to the “positive model” of communication with the child and changed the style of education. Family members acquired the skills of interaction with each other, avoiding conflict situations based on sufficiently developed higher psychic functions and skills in the child.
- The non-verbal expression enhanced the communication between children and adults and contributed to a new experience of interaction between the family members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of the average group values obtained for hyperactive children with ADHD upon completion of the general part of the program and the data of emotional and mental capacity of the experimental groups 1 and 2 revealed some positive dynamics.

Participation in the complex art-therapeutic program showed the general changes of the emotional conditions of children and the nature of interaction with peers, enhancement of positive motivation to education and increased the interest in task performing. The children have learned how to react to the negative emotions in convert them to the forms of symbolic expression that reflected in the bright and creative works and, in general, improved the test results.

A comparative analysis of the data received in the experimental groups of children revealed more significant positive dynamics among participants of the experimental group 2, where the pathogenesis of hyperactivity was stipulated by socio-psychological factors. This manifested in significant decrease in the anxiety and emotional stress in general and the active establishment of interpersonal relations, improving of attention concentration and the mental health of children.

The psychological factors determining the hyperactivity of children in the experimental group 2, resulted in neurological syndromes in children and are the method of problem solving being the reactive-protective method of their processing and unconscious attempt to relieve it and acquire the mental harmony. Impracticability of this attempt has resulted in a lack of faith in own strength and personal regress expressed as inadequate adaptation to the reality of hyperactive children [21].

Art therapy based on the pathogenesis of hyperactivity was aimed at restoration and strengthening of mental integrity of the person in the family, individual and group work.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, it can be concluded that the work with hyperactive children of preschool age requires the specific attention to the sufficient potential of the complex art-therapeutic approach consisting of the stages of a integrated, systemic psychotherapeutic process oriented to restoration and strengthening of the mental integrity of the personality of a child through the normalization of relations between the family members and peers and the resolution of internal conflict.

The result of the art therapy is the normalization of mental functions and adaptation of personal development of a child with behavioral disorders to the social relationships.

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