

SAHK

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Questions

In SAHK, CE is employed as a system in which different training programs are accommodated to cater for needs of different client groups. The structured routine and consistent environment under CE allows people on the Autistic Spectrum (AS) to experience success in a systematic way via acting out positive behaviors. Learning in group is both challenging and rewarding particularly for adults on AS, can play-drama provide a suitable emotional learning platform for them?

Objectives

Despite good cognitive and language abilities, learning emotions is difficult for adults on AS. Problems in understanding and expressing emotions have a detrimental effect on their social well beings and vocational life. This study evaluated the effects of play-drama on their abilities of understanding and expressing emotions.

Methods

Four adults on AS (aged 19-24), with normal to moderately impaired intellectual abilities, attended six 1-hour play-drama group sessions. Participants were given plenty of opportunities to observe, to feel and experience four basic emotions (happy, sad, anger, fear) through watching videos of two highly structured scenarios and then acting them out. One emotion was selected for each participant for follow-up during daily encounters in real-life situations. Intervention by frontline staff was provided to reinforce the emotional learning. Their abilities to understand and to express the four basic emotions were evaluated before and after the group. For assessing emotional understanding, they were asked to recognize an emotion from photo and drawing, to identify an emotion based on a situation, a desire and a belief. The four expressive tasks includes asking them to show, to define, to give and experience of and to suggest a way to cope with the basic emotions.

Results

All participants showed deficits in understanding and expressing the four basic emotions before attending the group. They were at different levels of play, from primitive functional play to advanced flexible sequential play. After intervention, improvements were found in all levels of emotional understanding tasks (except belief-based emotions). Improvements were also noted in the expressive abilities. All participants showed a more appropriate and flexible way to express the four basic emotions, but not in defining them or in suggesting coping strategies.

Conclusion

The implementation of the play-drama group in the CE system with consistent follow-up in real-life situations provides an effective platform to motivate adults on AS to learn actively in identifying situational-based emotions and in acting out their emotions more properly. Participants, although at different levels of cognitive ability and play skills, could be benefited from the play-

drama groups. This supported the remedial approach that people on AS should be exposed to more opportunities of play during learning.



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