

ART THERAPY RESOURCES



ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Emma is in a new relationship. Emma sometimes believes her new boyfriend is the best thing to ever happen in her life. She focuses a lot of her attention on him and spends so much time with him and also spends money buying him elaborate gifts. Lately Emma resents him because of all the attention and effort she gives him. Emma yells at her boyfriend daily about everything that she perceives as wrong. Emma then immediately regrets yelling at him and believes he is going to leave her. This emotional upheaval led Emma to her most recent attempt at suicide as she was convinced her new boyfriend would leave her. Emma notes she feels very unstable in her emotions. She feels giving her boyfriend attention and gifts will mean he won't leave her. This exercise is designed to help the client work on stabilising their emotions and overall mood. Once the client can stabilise their mood, they can start to explore other aspects of their interpersonal functioning and sense of identity. Using watercolours as an art material can serve as an analogy that can help the client understand the influence of decisions on the volatility of emotions. This exercise is an exploratory exercise which can help your client explore a psychological understanding of emotions as well as provide a calming experience of using watercolours.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- If the client has not used watercolours before, explain the process of how watercolours are designed to work with water and the difference in how various quantities of water can impact how pigment reacts. Ask your client to wet their paintbrush with water and then apply some watercolour pigment to a blank page.
- Ask your client to engage in a few minutes of playing with water and pigment and noticing the effect that various quantities of water and pigment react to each other. For example, a lot of water can add chaos to the ability to control the pigment. Using controlled amounts of water can allow the creator to make something purposeful and meaningful in the artwork.
- After the exercise, ask the client to reflect on the emotions that may have surfaced during the exercise and any insight they gained from the interaction of water and watercolour pigment.

EXAMPLE EXERCISE:

Emma client felt relaxed playing with the watercolours and applying varying degrees of water. The use of water introduced a calming medium to the art exercise for Emma.

Through applying different volumes of water and watercolour pigment, Emma was able to see how the impact of her decisions on how much water (drama) impacted the pigment (her level of emotions).



NOTE: more details can be found at www.arttherapyresources.com.au/case-study-bpd