Healing Power of Play, Laughter, and Humor

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**Literature Review**

Ciera V. Scott, Lee A. Hyer & Laura C. McKenzie researched to demonstrate the healing power of laughter by applying humor as a psychotherapy technique on older adults with depression and anxiety disorders (Scott, Hyer, & McKenzie, 2015). Authors stated that as the younger generation grows, the percentage of older adult individuals keeps on increasing. Previous studies suggest that older adults who are undergoing psychological therapy are mostly facing issues related to depression and anxiety. The authors underlined the utilization of treatment that was empirically reinforced at the late phase of life i.e., on older adults. Such treatments included Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and Problem Solving Therapy. The study also aimed at demonstrating the significance of psychoeducation and Therapeutic alliance in influencing a positive impact on individuals with depression and anxiety. For this purpose, humor was adopted as a fundamental tool of therapeutic alliance to influence the emotional healing of individuals. Furthermore, two cases were presented with 10 subjects suffering from clinical depression; the group therapy in which humor initially comes from individuals and then cherished by psychotherapists, and humor that initially comes from the psychotherapists and is directed at the single individual in individual therapy. The results of the study coincided with the author's expectations. Both therapist-directed humor from individuals and client-directed humor from therapist influenced a positive change in the mental health of individuals (Scott et al., 2015). In a therapeutic alliance, trust is developed at the very start, followed by the individual's belief in seeking positive treatment. It eventually serves to develop a sense of hope in an individual’s soul, which drives the transformation process. It was concluded that humor serves as a podium by which individuals are able to lose the feelings of fear and vulnerability and instill the power of sharing their particular stories (Scott et al., 2015).

In another Case report, Pamela K. Frankenfiled analyzed the power of a play and humor as a nursing intervention on the child who was suffering from cancer and undergoing therapeutical procedures (Frankenfield, 1996). It was initially thought that for patients to cope with the illnesses, inflicting humor could serve as a key strategy. In medical settings, nurses can utilize humor to help children reduce depression and anxiety by creating a playful environment. The objective of this case study to examine the impact of a playful environment derived from the utilization of humor on the mental health of a patient suffering from cancer. The subject of the study was the 5-year-old Caucasian boy who was identified with left orbit Retinoblastoma. He was admitted to the clinic with a history of constipation, pallor, bone pain, and abdominal issues. Chemotherapy was initially suggested by the oncologists, and it was observed that the child began to experience anxiety regarding the procedure. Creating the playful environment by the use of humor such as play on words, joke-telling, silly stickers, funny movies, medical play, tickling from the nurses of the facility reduced the feelings of depression and anxiety in a child during the medical procedures. (Frankenfield, 1996). Moreover, the article reviewed the advantages of play and humor by discussing the significance of different aspects of Play therapy. The implication in the field of humor interventions was also analyzed. In conclusion, the creation of a playful environment by the use of humor was essentially recommended.

Nancy G. Westburg conducted another study in which she analyzed the impact of Laughter, Humor, and Hope on the health of the patients and staff living at the assisted facility (Westburg, 2003). The objective of the study was to examine the hope levels, laugher, and humor practice of the individuals living at the assisted facility. The subjects of the study under test were 24 mature individuals with ages between 69- 96 years and 21 members of the staff in the assisted facility. Results showed that the levels of hope in these individuals were predominantly associated with humor and laugher (Westburg, 2003). Both the residents and staff informed about the various benefits influenced by humor and laugher in terms of hope. Disparities were reported based on the source and frequency of humor and laughter.

**Reflection**

These peer-reviewed articles depict the healing power of humor, laughter, and play according to which it is evident that these factors play a positive role in influencing the mental health of the person.

It is established that the Humor and Laugher serve as powerful medicine which amplifies the healing power for a person. However, generally, it is understood that Humor and Laugher improve the physical health of a person by strengthening the immune system, boosting mood, and reducing pain but, mental health effects of humor and play are often unrecognized. Healing power might come from the two aspects: induced immune system corresponding to enhanced wound healing that improves the physical health, and release of stress and anxiety following the enhanced interaction with others.

From the first article in my literature review, I learned how Laugher and Humor serve as a means of stress and anxiety release in patients suffering from depression and anxiety disorders (Scott et al., 2015). Humor serves as a key tool in improving the relationship between the therapist and patient during the therapeutic alliance. Greater interaction allows the patients to express their feelings more efficiently with the therapist and embrace themselves on the journey of the healing process. From the second article, I learned how laugher and play therapy could be useful in reducing the anxiety related to the treatment process (Frankenfield, 1996). The third article made me learn that hope can be derived through the practice of laughter and humor (Westburg, 2003).Hope is a force that motivates person to peruse his goals and dreams and it is only achieved if a person is ready to embark on the journey of healing process by leaning to forget his past. Ultimately, Laugher and Humor are the forces that serve this purpose.

**References**

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