

Surf therapy as a means of deepening connection in a group therapy process

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Abstract

Resurface is an evidence-based therapeutic retreat set-up to help a client in addressing their depression and trauma. The Resurface programmes are structured on the essential resource building stages of both EMDR and CBT, the only two treatment modalities recommended by NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) for the treatment of PTSD, as well as the positive psychology evidence-based interventions taught at The Universities of East London, Pennsylvania and Chicago (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, Duckworth, Frederickson, Nolan,) and the philosophical legacy of the Aristotle. The key to any form of lasting psychological change is re-embracing connection with others whom you value. Addiction, depression and trauma always lead to isolation, loneliness and a lack of being understood. Resurface puts the power of connectivity at the forefront of all the therapeutic activities. Following a retreat, clients are armed with new information and understanding relating to both why they felt the way they did but also information on how to progress going forward in their lives. Previous clients have reported that attending a resurface retreat gives them a huge 'therapeutic boost', saving time and energy on their rehabilitative journey. This saving of time allows for a greater ease of implementing and integrating various therapeutic techniques, tools and resources into both their every-day lives and their therapy practice. As well as learning crucial new tools and interventions aimed at recovery from trauma and increasing flourishing, the retreats generate new, positive memories (themselves a resource to carry to forward), generates unexpected realisations in their own lives as well as witnessing other people's courage, vulnerability and strength. This creates a great springboard into the next stage of a client's healing process. Initial research is showing significant decreases in the anxiety (Gad-7) and depression (PHQ-9) with a concurrent significant increase in Change in Outlook (CiO) biometrics.

There is a growing body of evidence for the benefits of the use of water-based activities and environments as an alternative or complimentary therapeutic intervention to mainstream, medicalised approaches. Surfing is one such activity with the health benefits of surf therapy linked to the fluid and dynamic nature of surfing and the sea, while learning to surf in a group context can help enhance a sense of belonging and identity

through shared experiences in the surf. This paper introduces the ways during which embodied and artistic add nature can empower children with psychological state difficulties, especially Autism. The study explores embodied experiences and therefore the use of an ingenious, participatory approach to evaluating a surf therapy intervention. As such, we investigate the usability of a novel participatory evaluation method, body mapping, to evaluate the feelings and emotional wellbeing of young participants in a surf therapy programme. Findings show how body mapping can be used to help create a richer picture of the potential health and wellbeing outcomes from engaging with the sea and highlights surfing as psychosomatic experience. The paper highlights the potential of in-situ embodiment practices and artistic methodologies like body mapping to support therapeutic processes, especially those associated with the imagination and emotional body, in a playful and engaging way. "We're passionate about creating an expansive therapeutic healing space that extends beyond what is accessible in a therapy room" says Adam, who began surfing in high school. "We're engaging during a process that supports the individual growth also because the social engagement of each participant." "The ocean has been a huge source of healing in my life," says Nathan, who has been surfing since he was seven years old. "I'm very interested in introducing surfing to struggling adolescent boys." Alongside their former clinical mentors, Christopher Arrillaga and Roberto Lascano, Adam and Nathan wanted to create an experience for young men that is both healing and community-building. The social engagement that Adam mentions is one key component to Surf Circle's success. "Adolescents are such social beings, which I feel that surfing could also be an exquisite medium to bring these boys together and build community," Nathan adds. By creating a small community of adolescent boys, the two hope they explore another one of their shared passions: developing healthy masculinity. "We're all male-identified clinicians who are really interested by working with older boys or young men who are battling what it means to become an individual in our current context of toxic masculinity," says Adam. "Male identity development are often quite challenging and quite nuanced, also as rewarding." "by that concentrate on boys, we'll really focus effectively on problems with masculinity, and sexuality, and adolescent development more than we could with a mixed-gender group," Nathan explains. Both Adam and Nathan have experience providing therapy to young men, in addition to their experience with childhood development and

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childhood trauma, which will help them in their work with Surf Circle. "I think it are often hard for boys to interact in individual therapy sometimes , so something communal could also be an honest thanks to urge boys to return to a therapeutic space who may not have otherwise," says Nathan. By focusing on a physical activity rather than a more traditionally therapeutic setting, Nathan feel that the boys will dive into the experience head-first. Adam, Nathan, Christopher, and Roberto have all known for years about the therapeutic nature of surfing, but it was not until recently that research began to support their feelings. Early last year, Nathan read a Washington Post article about the U.S. Navy's study using surfing to treat veterans with PTSD. After he shared that article with Adam, the pair knew they had to create Surf Circle. "I had always experienced surfing as deeply nourishing and therapeutic, but I never had heard of it being taken seriously therein way. Since then, I discovered that there are a lot of people doing surf therapy for a number of issues - people suffering from PTSD, survivors of abuse, survivors of sex trafficking," "Preliminary studies show that surfing really can help reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD." Initial results from the Navy's study suggest surfing can also lead to a decrease in insomnia.