









Attitude and interventions of the therapists. attention and tells his or her story. All eyes the story group and in the art therapy group are focused on the speaker while the others the focus remains on the individual. In both listen, and perhaps ask questions. groups, it is considered important to confrontThe story group provides an overview of the traumatic material from the safety of treat-personal history of the participants with a lot ment structure. The art therapist stimulatesof opportunity to probe for details. Specific the client to use certain materials, and helpsaspects of the story may be tackled in art the client to search for those images that aretherapy. By adding art therapy, it becomes associated with the traumatic experiencepossible to continue themes for extended While sitting next to the client and discussingperiods. Words are spoken in seconds, but his work there is ample opportunity to probe creating an image takes much more time. for details, such aswhat did the surroundingsthis may intensify the therapy process. look like?What colours did you, what did Images made in art therapy are tangible, con- you stand?Where were the others?crete. They can be stored away physically, The material choice is jointly made betweenThe content of what is being expressed is work with clay as can sometimes release mentThe content of what is being expressed is ories of earth and corpses. When this kind ofoften less important than the manner in fear occurs the decision can be taken to makewhich this expression occurs. Most clients a drawing of the trauma first, then, at a laterhave spoken about their wartime experiences stage this can be used as a starting point before, but often in a highly stereotypical work with clay. People often attempt to control manner. In this process, they are encouraged their emotions by working with pencil and a to step outside of this stereotypical frame ruler. Working with brush and paint is much (Laub & Podell, 1995). This may give rise to more difficult because more control has to be anxiety, but also offers a new opportunity for relinquished. Colours are more intensely expeworking through the experience. New, and rience, and may bring someone closer toet untouched aspects of traumatic experi- their traumatic experiences. ence, may come to the fore. Clients increas-

### The combination of story group and art therapy

The combination of therapies is meant toParticipants seem very committed to the ther- integrate recollections of traumatic events irapy and the groups tend to be highly cohe- both a verbal, and a non-verbal way, and forsive. This provides the safe basis from which both methods to complement each otherthe participants can confront anxiety and The two therapists run the story group and gain a new perspective on life, as well as dis- the art therapy group jointly. In this way, they engage from misery, and to have fun. can maintain an overview of the therapy process in both.

### References

The atmosphere in each therapy group isDasberg, H., Bartura, J. & Amit, Y. (2001). noticeably different. The story group usually Narrative group therapy with aging child sur- has a more palpable tension, while the mood vivors of the Holocaust. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 35, 33-35. in art therapy tends to be more relaxed. In the story group one person is the centre of

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their language; they keep repeating themselves or just cannot find the words to express what they want to say. In art therapy we work with a 'language of imagery' through which communication and exploration may at last become possible.

<sup>5</sup> Often people prefer to work with pencil and a ruler to express the images in a very precise and controlled way. The suggestion instead to paint or to draw may be difficult and increase anxiety. Old patterns have to be relinquished, which results in fear of loss of control. What emerges when they are able to do so, is the ability to work more freely, less controlled, and with more authenticity. Working with a brush gives less control, while working with colour stimulates the emotions in a way that a grey pencil doesn't. In this way flexibility is encouraged.

<sup>6</sup> A more extensive reference list can be ordered through the first author: [ivdv@centrum45.nl](mailto:ivdv@centrum45.nl)

<sup>1</sup> In the following, on behalf of readability, the masculine and the feminine will both be represented by the masculine when the text is applicable to both sexes. The masculine in this article feels somewhat more comfortable because most group members are male.

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the reasons why an open group setting is important. In a closed group such a group-culture would have to be rebuilt time and again.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from being a preparation for telling the story, we also believe that traumatic experiences should first be explicitly placed within the life-story. These experiences have often become split off, dissociated and fragmented, as a result of which they no longer form part of the flow of life.

<sup>4</sup> Often early memories are stored in a more sensory or bodily way. The same is true for early traumatic memories. Images may form the 'key' to these memories and the accompanying emotions.

Moreover, people are sometimes stuck in

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