

The Use of Creative Flow in Art Therapy to Help Survivors of Sex Trafficking

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Abstract

This paper calls attention to the modern day slavery issue of sex trafficking and presents the concept of creative flow in art therapy as an effective intervention to help survivors move beyond the trauma. The various circumstances that perpetuate and enable the criminal industry to continue to exploit women and girls around the world will be explained. The various types of traumatic experiences and possible mental health consequences that women and girls face before, during, and after enslavement in sex trafficking will be explored. Various forms of clinically based treatment approaches and responsive actions that are currently helping survivors recover from complex trauma are described. Alfred Adler's concepts of *lifestyle*, *early recollections and flashbacks*, *sense of belonging*, and *gemeinschaftsgefühl* will also be explored in context of trauma therapy for survivors of sex trafficking. Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow is explained and is connected to research that proves art making is a flow producing activity. This paper points out the benefits of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow in the context of art therapy to help survivors give meaning to their experiences, gain self-awareness, and to experience hope for the future. Included at the end is a guide for how creative flow experiences in art therapy can help survivors of sex trafficking in their healing process based on concepts derived from Csikszentmihalyi's extensive studies.

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To the one who knows me and leads me every step of the way. I owe everything to you.

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The Use of Creative Flow in Art Therapy to Help Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking, also known as sexual exploitation, is a shameful injustice in our world today. The International Labour Organization (2014) estimated there were 4.5 million victims of sexual exploitation. These statistics are staggering, but even more tragic is that these numbers only include known cases or rough estimates of sex trafficking activity. Arnold and Bertone (2002) explained that obtaining statistics of those impacted by sex trafficking is never complete because of the nature of the hidden crime. The reality is that survivors of sex trafficking are not free from the victimization and trauma simply from the physical removal from their oppressive environment. Grant (2014) emphasized that the journey towards healing involves a more complex focus into the mental, emotional, and spiritual issues of women and girls who have experienced the various harmful traumas of sex trafficking. Mental health services are needed to help women and girls process the complexity of their trauma in an effective and safe way. Barriga (2013) declared that the greatest way to combat the injustice and pain of sex trafficking is the partnership between the various disciplines of mental health services. This paper will describe the background of sex trafficking, current mental health services serving women and girls in trafficking, and the potential for creative flow in art therapy as an effective intervention. Alfred Adler's concepts of *lifestyle*, *early recollections and flashbacks*, *sense of belonging*, and *gemeinschaftsgefühl* will also be explored in context of trauma therapy for survivors of sex trafficking. The purpose of this paper is to give insight into the experiences of women and girls who have been sex trafficked and to present the use of creative flow in art therapy as a clinically based method to help survivors heal from complex trauma experiences and rediscover hope for a new life of wholeness and healing. Included in Appendix A is a guide for how creative flow

experiences in art therapy can help survivors of sex trafficking obtain goals and benefits of flow based on concepts derived from Csikszentmihalyi's extensive studies.

History and Background of Sex Trafficking

The enslavement and mistreatment of other human beings has been a dark aspect of humanity throughout history. Grant (2014) stated that sex trafficking is becoming the world's "fastest growing industry and most profitable criminal activity" (Grant, 2014, p. 40). Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) reported that the majority of those in sex trafficking are female, which is why the focus of this paper is the impact on women and girls. Modern slavery, however, does not discriminate against race, age or gender. Grant (2014) said that documentation shows sexual trafficking as a global concern and nearly every nation in the world has a role in the perpetuation of the criminal industry. Globalization has many benefits in our modern age, but it has also enabled easier facilitation of transporting human cargo (Grant, 2014, p. 43). Barriga (2013) explained that trafficking of persons is driven by greed, power, and financial gain. The tragedy of sex trafficking is that it is a self-pleasing endeavor that devalues human souls by taking away their basic human rights, dignity, and welfare (Barriga, 2013, p. 88). The following paragraphs will further explain modern sexual slavery with the purpose to give greater context to where survivors of sex trafficking may be coming from after they are rescued.

Definition and Criteria of Sex Trafficking

The U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act defines sex trafficking as the "recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of an individual who under force, fraud or coercion is induced to perform a commercial sex act" (End Slavery Now, 2017). Trafficking is a major global transportation issue, but Wilson and Butler (2014) explained that travel or kidnapping does not have to be among the criteria for an individual to be considered

sexually exploited or sex trafficked. Kubasek and Herrera (2015) described that the underlying criminal behavior behind sex trafficking is exploitation by perpetrators through various means of maintaining control over victims and forcing them to perform a sexual service. Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) identified that perpetrators, such as pimps and traffickers, maintain control over their victims through force, fraud or coercion typically involving threats to the victim or the victim's loved ones (Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009).

Sex trafficking can remain completely hidden or can happen in plain sight but not be perceived. Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) described how sex trafficking occurs in both public and private settings. Public and more visible settings include street prostitution and strip clubs (Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009, p. 37). Private and underground settings may include motels, cars or massage parlors guised as a prostitution front. Knowledge of the variety of settings women and girls can be trafficked into provides insight and awareness into the levels of traumatic exploitation they may have been exposed to (Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009, p. 37). This variety of exposure within the criteria of being sexually exploited is vital for service providers to know in order to avoid generalized assumptions of the survivors' experiences and needs.

Circumstances of Entering and Entrapment of Sex Trafficking

There are a range of factors that increase the risk for women and girls to enter an enslaved lifestyle of sexual exploitation and remain entrapped. Familial experiences, lack of resources, money, and false promises are universally common tactics used by traffickers to manipulate women and girls into sex trafficking. Psychological manipulation and violence are used continually by traffickers to keep women and girls from escaping. The following sections will discuss circumstances, risk factors, and perpetrator tactics to give context to how women and girls become trafficked.

Poverty and bondage debt. Tan (2012) stated that poverty is the most significant cause of trafficking around the world. Daughters are sold in some countries for payment because they are a financial burden (Tan, 2012). Tan (2012) discussed that in many third world countries, pimps come into villages and make false promises to the parents that their daughters will have a secure job that will provide financial support for the family, opportunity for education in places like the United States, and/or promise an arranged marriage. False promises take a tragic turn as girls are sold into sex trafficking and end up in brothels or across borders, often without the knowledge of their parents. They are then held in debt and bondage by their “purchaser”, pimp, or brothel owner. Freedom from this debt is nearly impossible to overcome as the price of a girl or child decreases significantly after the first sexual encounter and communication with their families is restricted by perpetrators (Tan, 2012). Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) stated that traffickers ensure the enslaved entrapment of women and girls by tactics such as taking away official documents, isolating them, threatening them and their family, and/or using violence.

Family dysfunction. Wilson and Butler (2014) found that family dysfunction can lead children, adolescents, and women to runaway whereby becoming vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Domestic violence, substance abuse, and sexual abuse are common risk factors that set the stage for re-victimization of individuals as children or throughout. Childhood maltreatment that involves sexual abuse and violence as well as escape from the foster care system are common background circumstances for most runaway adolescents. In families and communities where drugs and alcohol are present, children and youth become susceptible to using substances as a coping mechanism. Runaway individuals with a lack of basic resources and/or dependence on substances may resort to exchanging sexual favors to acquire their needs

(Wilson & Butler, 2014). These circumstances expose them to commercial sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and the eventual entrapment into sex trafficking.

Luring women and girls into sex trafficking. Sex traffickers make it their business to find runaway women and girls that are vulnerable and lack basic needs. Gary (2015) said that sex traffickers and pimps have a system of subtly luring girls into the trade. Pimps will approach women and girls with initial flattery, gifts, attention, promises of love, and pretend to be their boyfriends (Gary, 2015). This tactic quickly turns into intimidation, coercion, and sexual exploitation for money. Women and girls become entrapped in sex trafficking not only through physical aggression, but also psychological manipulation. Gary (2015) reported that it is difficult for women and girls to leave because of lack of resources as well as the belief that there is hope for love with their pimps. Wilson and Butler (2014) stated that this process is most often seen in cases of sexually trafficked women and girls in the United States.

Stigmatization

Levine (2017) said that survivors of sex trafficking often undergo social stigmatization. The word stigma can be defined as a mark of shame or a stain on one's reputation (Dictionary.com, 2017). Society holds stigmas over women and girls that have been sex trafficked. Grant (2014) stated that stigmatization often stems from judgement and misunderstanding that continues even after women and girls are rescued. The following sections describe stigmas associated with survivors of traffickers with the purpose to explain how stigmas affect their identity, role in society, and healing process.

“Victim” versus “Victimization”

There is a distinct psychological difference between the use of the word “victim” and the term of one experiencing “victimization.” The difference is that “victim” refers to identity and

“victimization” refers to experiential circumstances. The perpetual use of the term “victim” for women and girls who have been through the trauma of sex trafficking is a stigma that labels their identity in the world as being helpless and incapable of making their own decisions. Grant (2014) discussed how society questions why women and girls do not escape from their predicaments earlier and judge them for their actions of entry into sex trafficking and even re-entry after being rescued. Being labeled as a “victim”, especially outside of the courtroom, makes it psychologically harder for survivors of sex trafficking to see themselves as empowered, victorious, and capable. This creates a barrier and challenge for them to feel like they can have a normal place in society. Arnold and Bertone (2002) discussed how women and girls often reject “victim” status due to fact that their motivation for various choices within the life of sex trafficking was for survival and protection of themselves and their loved ones (Arnold & Bertone, 2002). It is noteworthy to mention that there are some instances when the use of the word “victim” accurately portrays the situation. Lloyd (2011) described the need for there to be more awareness of the entrapment of sexually enslaved women and girls from their pimps so that authorities, such as police officers and the court, understand that the individual is a “victim” rather than a willing participant. The purpose of this section is to portray the significance of words and the proper timing and meaning of their usage. Grant (2014) suggested use of the term “survivor” as a more accurate portrayal of their character, endurance, and true identity once women and girls have been rescued. Survivors of sex trafficking ultimately need to know that they can rise above their experiences and that they have the innate ability to do so.

The Stigma of Voluntary Consent

There is also the stigma that women, including adolescent girls, currently in or coming out of prostitution establishments and strip clubs voluntarily chose to be there. The legalization

of prostitution is a debated issue and raises questions about the distinctions between prostitution and sex trafficking. Kubasek and Herrera (2015) said that there is no proof that legalization of prostitution reduces sex trafficking, but it does make it harder to criminalize perpetrators and identify victims. Arnold and Bertone (2002) found that “voluntary” prostitution often becomes trafficking and women find themselves in conditions not expected. Lloyd (2011) noted that women and girls are often blamed for putting themselves in their predicament and seen as willing participants in their own abuse. Kubasek and Herrera (2015) argued that the stigma of women voluntarily choosing a lifestyle of sexual exploitation discredits the history that brought them to that place and denies possible factors of what keeps them in a dangerous line of work.

Multi-Cultural Considerations of Stigmas

Every culture and country holds stigmas over women and girls who have been in the life of sex trafficking. Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) stated that the majority of trafficked sex workers in the United States are brought in from other countries. The women and girls who are rescued from sex trafficking not only have to endure stigmatization from a foreign country, but they also bear the burden of stigmas from their home communities. This struggle is also relevant for other countries as the trafficking of victims across borders is a common aspect of the criminal trade. Stigmas from survivors’ home communities may cause a barrier for them re-entering a normal life at home or in the foreign society that have been trafficked.

Mental Health Consequences

Grant (2014) recognized that true healing from an enslaved existence in sex trafficking requires deeper work in the heart, mind, and soul. Exposure to cumulative and multiple traumas that are both psychological and physical in nature frequently lead to negative psychological consequences for women and girls who have been in sex trafficking. Negative mental health

consequences vary due to the broad range of exploitative traumas as well as the survivors' interpretation of their experiences. Hjertaas (2013) said that the complexity of healing from trauma is an individual's struggle to cope with what has occurred based on the combination of inevitably distressing events and his or her unique worldview that influences their perspective on meaning. The following sections will discuss surviving women and girls' experiences of cumulative and multiple traumas, common psychological diagnoses, and the connection between physical and mental health.

Cumulative Trauma

Women and girls experience cumulative trauma on multiple occasions in sex trafficking. Martin, Cromer, DePrince, and Freyd (2013) defined cumulative trauma as experiences of different types of trauma apart from the number of incidents. Sex trafficking is not a singular type of trauma, but involves cumulative traumatic experiences that occur multiple times. The concept of cumulative trauma in sex trafficking is important to understand so as not to assume mental health issues of individual survivors. Treatment for women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking will need services that address the multiple layers of various traumatic experiences.

Diagnostic Symptoms and Indicators

Levine (2017) found that a majority of sex trafficked individuals have mental illness and often have dual diagnoses. Research shows that common diagnoses include depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety disorders (Levine, 2017). Gary (2015) said that dissociation is also very common as it is a coping mechanism. Levine (2017) argued the need for further study to offer better treatment for survivors of sex trafficking than is currently being conducted due to a lack of knowledge. Study of mental illnesses with the sex trafficked

population is limited and inconsistent due to factors such as cultural variances in the definitions of mental health diagnoses, the different populations that have been studied to date, and the various types of traumatic experiences within sex trafficking (Levine, 2017). Mental health care providers must approach diagnosing individuals rather than a population. Survivors of sex trafficking share some similar symptoms based on exploitation; however, each individual survivor's symptom presentation is largely based on their personal history of childhood trauma, entry into trafficking, and the traumatic quality of work during their experiences. This individualized presentation of symptomatology demonstrates the need for mental health professionals to provide a thorough assessment from the beginning of treatment and to prioritize the most clinically appropriate diagnoses to inform the treatment plan.

Connection Between Physical and Mental Health

Levine (2017) emphasized the importance of recognizing that survivors have physical health concerns in association with and addition to mental illness. Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) explained how women in sex trafficking are often forced to exist in “inhumane environments and work under dangerous conditions” (Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009, p. 41). Due to the physically and sexually abusive environment of sex trafficking, rescued women and girls can have physical health issues such as bruising and battering, attempts at self-harm, intravenous drug usage, vaginal pain, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, malnourishment, and chronic pain syndromes (Levine, 2017). Levine (2017) also stated that women may have experienced unsafe abortions and unwanted pregnancies. Martin, Cromer, DePrince, and Freyd (2013) said that multiple traumas lead to health problems such as obesity, somatic complaints, substance abuse, and sleep disturbance. Secondary psychological issues may also include substance abuse. Stotts Jr. and Ramey (2009) discussed how women and girls may not only use drugs and alcohol as a

coping skill, but traffickers often coerce women and girls into drug use to gain control over them. The burden of physical illnesses, discomfort, and addictions should not be dismissed when considering the mental health status and behavior of survivors of sex trafficking.

Trauma-Informed Approaches and Responsive Actions

Barriga (2013) recognized the need for partnership and collaboration between various mental health services to offer the best help for survivors of sex trafficking. Women and girls rescued from sex trafficking have a variety of mental health needs that may not necessarily be met by one treatment modality. Grant (2014) discussed that an important consideration for mental health care professionals when working with victims is to avoid assuming to know what survivors of sex trafficking need. Important considerations for professionals include awareness of survivors' unique traumatic experiences, cultural and ethnic differences, varying family background, and lifestyle (Grant, 2014). These considerations will better prepare professionals to have sincere empathy when working with survivors and will most likely build a more trusting therapeutic relationship. It is also imperative for mental health professionals to have a broader awareness of treatment approaches, including holistic and collaborative, to provide individualized opportunities for survivors' healing. The following sections will give specific trauma-informed approaches and responsive actions that strive to help women and girls recover from the mental health consequences of sex trafficking.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

Survivors of sex trafficking face the challenge of healing from complex layers of traumatic experiences. The importance of approaching treatment from a trauma informed lens is underscored not only because it offers an opportunity to heal the complex experiences of a survivor, but also emphasizes paying close attention to avoiding the re-traumatization of the

individual. Levine (2017) discussed the need to build upon current trauma-informed approaches to better help survivors of sex trafficking. The following sections include some common trauma-informed approaches that provide insight into working with severely traumatized individuals. This research is relevant in that it offers insight and approaches to help survivors of sex trafficking work through complex trauma in a safe manner.

Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. Lonergan (2014) stated that cognitive behavioral therapies have the strongest empirical evidence for treatment of traumatized individuals, specifically for those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Levine (2017) confirmed that trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most common treatment interventions to help survivors of sex trafficking develop coping skills, process and narrate their trauma, and experience closure. The emphasis of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) is exposure and cognitive restructuring. The exposure component aims to provide a contained environment for individuals to face their traumatic memories through methods such as imagination or other stimuli (Lonergan, 2014). The cognitive restructuring component is meant to help individuals explore and resolve cognitive distortions and maladaptive thought patterns traumatized individuals have about themselves and the world around them. Grant (2014) summarized that survivors of sex trafficking often have mistaken beliefs from childhood and traumatic experiences that can be a major obstacle to healing. Oberst and Stewart (2003) described how Adler called these mistaken beliefs fictions which are created by individuals to help them perceive themselves, the world, and the environment. These fictions subconsciously guide an individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Oberst & Stewart, 2003). TF-CBT can help confront cognitive distortions and fictions with the purpose to help traumatized individuals recreate balanced perceptions of themselves and world around them. Lloyd (2011)

said that freedom from years of manipulation and control is frightening, but unlearning needs to happen for survivors of sex trafficking in order to reframe attitudes, core beliefs, and overpowering emotions. Lonergan (2014) emphasized that TF-CBT is most successful when the process includes connecting with the emotions associated with traumatic memories. Safety and containment within the therapeutic relationship is essential for a successful therapeutic experience. The consequence of not prioritizing safety within the therapeutic relationship may lead to negative treatment responses such as higher rate of avoidance or numbing. Lonergan (2014) postulated that further research is needed to refine the effectiveness of TF-CBT to include a wider range of diagnoses of traumatized individuals. Despite some limitations, TF-CBT is an empirically reliable treatment modality to help traumatized individuals, such as survivors of sex trafficking, move beyond their trauma through the opportunity to explore and reconstruct their beliefs and behaviors.

Trauma-informed art therapy. Schouten, de Niet, Knipscheer, Kleber, and Hutschemackers (2015) recognized that art therapy is a growing field that introduces successful outcomes when implemented with traumatized individuals. Trauma-informed art therapy can be used to process and move beyond the trauma through visual narration as well as the opportunity for self-discovery of strengths and interests through art making experiences. Rankin and Taucher (2003) described that trauma-informed strategies of art therapy include goals of expression, narration, exploration, management, and integration. Malchiodi (2012) described how art therapy allows individuals to accomplish these goals as they experiment with art materials, work through changes in emotions and behaviors in the art therapy process, and respond to images and themes they create. Essential to an individual's healing experience through art making is the presence of a trained art therapist to serve as a relational supporter,

guide, and witness. Hinz (2009) discussed the importance of the art therapist role as witness, because when individuals process traumatic experiences through art making, art products serve as tangible reflections and creative explanations of pain that may have never been acknowledged or expressed before. The presence of a witness who values the individual as well as the significance of the art product and revealed meaning is crucial so that individuals feel safe to express without resorting to avoidance or suppression of their emotions and cognitive revelations (Hinz, 2009).

Hinz (2009) found that art therapy often leads to verbal inquiry and discussion about the significance of created works, but art therapy also alternatively offers a nonverbal way for art therapists and others to witness the trauma that is depicted by the artist. Traumatic experiences are stored in non-verbal areas within the brain structure and may not be effectively processed using words, but art therapy uniquely allows clients to access emotions and feelings in a non-threatening way via artistic expression in a safe and controlled environment (Hinz, 2009). Hinz (2009) also found that art therapy can also help individuals connect with their emotions if their use of words appears to suppress and block access to their affective states, which is an important area of the brain to tap into for successful trauma-processing interventions.

Expanding research on the relationship between art therapy and neuroscience, according to Malchiodi (2012), continues to provide relevance for the use of art therapy with individuals who have experienced trauma. Malchiodi (2012) stated that trauma is considered both an emotional and physiological experience. Neuroscience has shown that intense emotional experiences and physiological sensory-based memories are stored in the limbic system of the brain, which suggests that the most successful treatment for traumatized individuals must involve processing through sensory and affective means. Art therapy has proven to provide an

experience for individuals to engage many parts of the brain, including the unique opportunity to tap into sensory material and evoke emotions through the use of art materials, which is often lacking in talk-based therapies (Malchiodi, 2012). Art therapy, according to Péntzes, van Hooren, Dokter, Smeijsters, and Hutschemaekers (2016), is distinct from other psychotherapies in that central to art therapy is the use of art materials within the therapeutic process. Hinz (2009) conceptualized the Expressive Arts Therapy Continuum as a framework to understand how different parts of the brain are stimulated when individuals engage with various art materials. The art therapist provides structure and support within the therapeutic context and understands how art materials effect different areas within the brain including kinesthetic and sensory, perceptual and affective, as well as cognitive and symbolic. Art therapy supports clients accessing emotions, identifying feelings, exploring cognitive beliefs, and experiencing somatic sensations that are necessary for processing and reconstructing their traumatic memories (Hinz, 2009).

Art therapy not only offers a safe modality of processing trauma, but the process of art making itself serves as a positive, healing experience. Kapitan (2010) discussed that art therapy allows clients to have relevant, developmentally appropriate experiences according to their unique needs and is therefore rewarding. Rewarding experiences increase healthy brain activity and provide an inviting space for personalized and cultural freedom of expression (Kapitan, 2010). Malchiodi (2012) said that neuroscience has proven that repetitive, reward-driven creative endeavors can “re-wire” the structure of the brain and reduce symptoms such as depression and anxiety. Enjoyable art making done on a regular basis can improve mood similar to chemical changes produced by medication (Malchiodi, 2012). Survivors of sex trafficking who deal with depression, anxiety, and the effects of PTSD can benefit from these positive art

making experiences as they develop healthy habits of naturally retraining and reshaping their brain to heal and experience joy.

Trauma-informed psychoeducation. Phoenix (2007) said that psychoeducation for clients regarding the effect of traumatic events is important because it offers a cognitive framework for trauma survivors' experiences. Core elements of traumatic experiences are marked by unawareness, uncontrollability, unpredictability, and confusion (Phoenix, 2007). Clarity and validation, according to Gary (2015), are gifts that help survivors of trauma give meaning to their experiences, acknowledge that injustice was done to them, and then find resolution to how to move forward with understanding of what they need to do for themselves in their healing process. Symptomatic or concerning behaviors of survivors of sex trafficking are normal responses in connection to traumatic experiences. Lloyd (2011) described the use of violence, lies, twisted logic, and brainwashing as common schemes traffickers use to force women and girls into submission and fear. Phoenix (2017) found that psychoeducation for survivors around phenomena, such as flashbacks, substance abuse, dissociation or aggression, helps survivors feel validated and understand the purpose behind the misbehavior. Oberst and Stewart (2003) described the Adlerian Psychotherapy approach to helping individuals understand their misbehavior by revealing their lifestyle and fictional goals. These fictional goals, such as striving for belonging or overcoming inferiorities, give insight into the individuals' innermost desires to be loved and the creative ways that they maneuver around challenges that hinder them from this ultimate goal (Oberst & Stewart, 2003). The revelation of thoughts, purposeful behavior, psycho-education about the schemes of perpetrators, and innermost needs can empower survivors to consciously make positive decisions and coping strategies.

Adlerian trauma therapy. Adlerian approach to trauma therapy is the recognition that although there are inevitably distressing events, there is a connection between an individual's lifestyle and their creative response to their circumstances (Hjertaas, 2013). The intention of Adlerian trauma therapy is to provide an approach to perceiving the effects of trauma on an individual's lifestyle while also uncovering individual and universal needs. The following sections identify key elements of Adlerian therapy in relation to the major issues that need to be addressed for survivors of trafficking in their process towards healing.

Lifestyle and perceptions. Hjertaas (2013) said that trauma, according to the Adlerian view, disrupts areas of functioning and the ability to carry out life tasks. Alfred Adler recognized the negative impact of external traumatic events; however, he questioned why some people fixated on disturbing experiences more than others (Hjertaas, 2013). Adler answered this question with the idea of an individual's lifestyle. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) described that lifestyle is creatively developed in early childhood as one experiences and interprets the world around him or her whereby engraining a set of core beliefs and goals for behavior that may or may not be recognized. Traumatic events confirm or conflict with a person's style of life and therefore causes psychological distress. Hjertaas (2013) explained Adler's thoughts on a "failing of the style of life" adds another depth to the trauma experienced. It is important to note that there are certain occurrences that even the healthiest individual could not withstand, but individual lifestyle is an effective way to describe the variety of responses to traumatic experiences. An Adlerian approach to working with trauma survivors is to gradually uncover the unique lifestyle and interpretations of experiences to gain insight into the best treatment goals for each individual survivor.

Early recollections and flashbacks. Hjertaas (2013) described the Adlerian perspective that a stressful event is experienced as traumatic if the threat is greater than the individual and/or there is a loss of personal control. These traumatic events are often replayed as flashbacks in a person's mind due to the inability to come to terms with the experience. Early memories, also called early recollections by Adlerian therapists, revolving around themes of vulnerability and danger may also come up for traumatized individuals (Hjertaas, 2013). Adlerian psychology emphasizes the significance of the timing of early recollections and the personal meaning that clients make from them. Flashbacks and traumatic memories are a common experience for survivors of sex trafficking and the effects of these traumatic disruptions in life are difficult to move past. Hjertaas (2013) said that flashbacks and early recollections can be viewed as messages to the self, usually connected to current perceptions of the self and beliefs of the world. An Adlerian approach is to help traumatized individuals, such as survivors of sex trafficking, externalize and then process the flashbacks and early recollections. This process can offer insight into the memories to explore current struggles, gain fresh perspectives, and provide hopeful meaning-making that propels survivors forward as they overcome feelings of inadequacy and helplessness (Hjertaas, 2013).

Sense of belonging. Shifron (2010) described the Adlerian perspective that it is a universal need to feel a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging results from knowing that one has a place in community, is a contributing member, and is recognized for their unique abilities (Shifron, 2010). Lloyd (2011) explained that despite the horrors that women and girls face in sex trafficking, pimps provide food, shelter, attention, and a sense of belonging to a family. It is important to replace these needs when survivors are rescued and taken away from what they considered to be their only community (Lloyd, 2011). Adlerian psychology recognizes that all

behavior is purposeful and survivors will go where they get needs met, even needs that are subconscious or unrecognized. Survivors of trafficking need to feel a sense of belonging in their new environment by service providers and other sex trafficking survivors. Gary (2015) emphasized the healing aspect of survivors of sex trafficking breaking isolation and realizing that there are others who can relate to their pain and experiences. Shifron (2010) explained the Adlerian view that individuals strive to belong by using their creative abilities to gain a sense of self and value amidst a community. Support for survivors and the opportunity to explore their unique skills through innate creativity is necessary to prevent them from going back to an enslaved lifestyle and experience a new life of belonging and acceptance.

Gemeinschaftsgefühl. La Voy, Brand, and McFadden (2014) found that current neuroscience has proven brain mirroring and our pre-wired ability to connect with one another. Survivors of sex trafficking not only need a sense of belonging, but they need to develop meaningful connection to others in order to mentally survive from their traumatic experiences. Alfred Adler (as cited in Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1956) developed the concept of *gemeinschaftsgefühl* to describe the need to be connected to society. Various translations of this German term have been used such as *social interest* and *community feeling* (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). The meaning of *gemeinschaftsgefühl* is not only a sense of belonging to a community but it describes a person's ability to connect and relate to others. La Voy, Brand, and McFadden (2014) explained that an individual is considered mentally healthy when *gemeinschaftsgefühl* is accomplished through identification and empathy with others. Survivors of sex trafficking may consider their past life with their pimp to have been their sense of community, but a true community feeling is more than just being around people that are in the same lifestyle. Adler said that although *gemeinschaftsgefühl* is an innate ability, it is developed

and influenced by experiences (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Gary (2015) described a situation where a sex trafficking survivor experienced healing when she determined her purpose was to help other survivors find their voice and work through their trauma. An Adlerian approach to helping survivors of trafficking reach a healthy mental state is to demonstrate *gemeinschaftsgefühl* and encourage them to not only accept love and help from others, but to give these gifts back to the community.

Responsive Actions

Several organizations and groups of individuals around the world have been stirred to action by the horrors of sex trafficking. The following sections will give accounts of globally responsive actions that have been implemented to help women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking heal from traumatic experiences and regain hope for true freedom. The following responsive actions are based on creative treatment modalities such as narrative therapy, psychodrama therapy, and art therapy.

Constructing narrative stories in Colombia. Sáenz Uribe (2012) found narrative therapy with survivors of sexual torture in Colombia to be beneficial. Providing a safe space for sharing stories allowed women to reveal their personal narrative through sharing what was valuable, sacred, and real from their experience. The opportunity for women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking to share and hear one another's stories helps them to know that they are not alone (Gary, 2015). The women found bravery and empowerment when telling their stories and this was therapeutic because of past threats by perpetrators to keep the secrecy of their identity and experience (Sáenz Uribe, 2012). Sáenz Uribe (2012) found that the establishment of trust allowed women to process current struggles and explore healthy alternatives to cope with trauma. Narrative therapy led to supporting the victims to find

metaphors that helped them experience joy, define purpose, reclaim the power and healthy relationships in their lives.

“River of Life” experiential. Lydia Atria Tan (2012) is the founder of the Art2Healing Project in Asia and has helped create art therapy programs for women and children recovering from sex trafficking. Tan (2012) described a narrative art therapy approach, called the “River of Life” experiential, used in Cambodia for a small group of women and girls at a shelter who had been rescued from sex trafficking. The premise of the group was to provide a safe way for the survivors to process and narrate their trauma experiences with the goal to help them find meaning and purpose to their stories. Participants were given a variety of materials and were instructed to make a chronological timeline titled “River of Life” on large cardboard with 5 images with different given themes that depicted a visual narrative of their life. Participants reported that the experiential was successful in empowering them to share deep thoughts and tragic experiences in a nurturing environment where they could reveal their narratives visually and verbally (Tan, 2017).

Rescue arts. Rescue Arts is an intervention used in organizations, such as Project Rescue in India, developed by Rebecca Grant Shults to bring healing through creative arts. Grant (2014) explained that the framework of Rescue Arts includes opportunity for expression, processing, and relational development using any creative medium. Grant (2014) laid out the framework guidelines which focus on the necessity of: 1) a safe place for trauma survivors to express themselves based on their content choice; 2) opportunity to process inwardly as well as in a safe group setting; and 3) a collaborative effort to empower survivors to develop their projects through trust and healthy attachments. Shults currently works directly with the survivors and other caretakers through creative means such as dance, writing, art and

performance to enable survivors to narrate their story at their own pace (Grant, 2014). Gary (2015) said that a group oriented approach was helpful to break the isolation that hinders healing. Shults recognizes the importance of teamwork and collective healing which is why the framework assumes a group oriented approach to help women and girls know they are not alone. Participation in Rescue Arts helps the women and girls process their trauma with ultimate benefits of finding love, freedom, forgiveness, and hope.

Trauma sensitive task oriented art therapy. Rankin and Taucher (2003) developed an effective, structured format approach to art therapy based on six trauma focused tasks. These tasks included safety, self-management, trauma narration, grieving traumatic losses, self-concept and worldview revision, and self and relational development (Rankin & Taucher, 2003). This approach was not specifically designed for survivors of sex trafficking; however, it was designed for traumatized individuals that experience the occurrence or threat of physical or psychological harm. Rankin and Taucher (2003) found that it is ultimately important to follow the clients lead through this process. Some trauma survivors may focus on one task for an extended amount of time and another may go sequentially through all six tasks. Rankin and Taucher (2003) identified these specific six tasks because they have proven to help decrease psychopathology and facilitate growth in survivors' well-being and positive life experiences.

Flow

Walker (2010) described the concept of flow as being in a state of complete absorption in an activity where time is irrelevant and there is a heightened awareness of the self. Flow states are more likely when individuals are given the freedom to choose activities based on their interests and have adequate time to engage in the process. Warren (2006) explained that spending time in a psychological state of flow reinforces a sense of self, reduces stress, and

brings meaning to experiences. Psychologist and author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) conducted extensive studies of how people experienced life and what they chose to do with their time that was most fulfilling. Through study of people, particularly in professions such as scientists, doctors, artists, musicians, and athletes across the globe, Csikszentmihalyi is known as the initial developer of the concept of flow experiences as beneficial to the well-being of individuals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The following sections will describe Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, a brief application of entering flow through art therapy means, and how creative flow is relevant to helping women and girls who are survivors of sex trafficking (see Appendix A).

Csikszentmihalyi's Concept of Flow

Csikszentmihalyi defined flow as "the state in which people are so involved in the activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described that one of the most important decisions people can make is how we choose to spend our time and what we choose to engage in. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) emphasized that if people don't take control over the direction of their life, they will be controlled by some other outside force or agency. Another important aspect of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow is that these experiences provide an opportunity to give order to thoughts and focus attention on goals set by the individual according to unique needs and skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The pursuit of a goal brings order in awareness because a person must concentrate all their attention on the task at hand and momentarily forget everything else. These periods of struggling to overcome challenges are what people find to be enjoyable and worthwhile as they utilize their strengths and continue to develop new coping and problem-solving skills. These experiences of harmony of the self in thoughts, actions, and beliefs are what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls the *optimal*

experience. As individuals stretch their skills and reach toward higher challenges through flow experiences, they become more complex individuals with a greater sense of self and a renewed awareness of meaning in their lives. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained that the purpose of living in a state of flow is to move beyond a life of simply surviving into a way of living life with purpose and fulfillment.

Creative Flow in Art Therapy

Art is one of those activities that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) found to consistently produce engagement in flow experiences. Warren (2006) found that both art therapy and Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow are concerned with the well-being and self-awareness of individuals through engaging activities. Chilton (2013) indicated that the improved well-being of individuals may be associated with a sense of control, autonomy, and accomplishment through the flow experience of art making. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) stated there are no exact recipes for how one can be happy or experience a state of flow, because it ultimately depends on the individual's efforts to be creative and intentional. Creative flow is not meant to be chaotic, but rather offers an opportunity for clients to experience the freedom to explore art media and engage in personal interests as they work on projects that align with their treatment goals.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) regarded work towards accomplishing self-made goals to be an essential part of keeping up the motivation and satisfaction of the flow experience. Client confusion about art therapy prompts or how to proceed can hinder individuals from reaching their creative flow and potential. Chilton (2013) recommended that art therapists provide structure, feedback, and clarity of goals to provide a space where clients can freely engage in their art endeavors with the security of knowing boundaries and expectations. When individuals are fully engaged in the flow of art making, Chilton (2013) observed that they may not be aware

of their emotions until the end of their creation in which pride and joy often become the predominant feelings (see Appendix A).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) rejected the idea that flow experiences are an unconscious absence of brain activity, like watching TV. There are unconscious aspects of the self that are revealed through flow activities, like art therapy, but this is simply the unknown of the psyche becoming known in the conscious mind. Contrary to the misconception of the absence of brain activity, flow experiences involve multiple areas of the brain which allows undivided attention to be focused on the task at hand (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Chilton (2013) discussed that the flow of art making taps in and out of different areas of the brain and therefore provides an experience that increases the functioning of healthy brain activity.

Art therapy not only help individuals enter into a state of creative flow, but Warren (2006) said that it provides a “secure base” for them to explore and process discoveries with someone they trust. Walker (2010) stated that the most enjoyable flow experiences reported by individuals involved some level of social interaction. This social interaction may be in context of a group art therapy approach or an interaction with a therapist, but the point is that the person needs to know they are not alone in their process and have a place to process their joys and concerns.

Relevance of Creative Art Therapy Flow for Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas of the benefits of flow are applicable to survivors of sex trafficking and their healing journey. Survivors of sex trafficking come out of an environment of extreme control where their actions and use of time is manipulated and decided by perpetrators. The process of learning how to reclaim ownership over their own lives, regain a sense of control over their decisions, and engaging in activities of their choice are goals that help women begin to

live a purpose filled life. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed that we often don't notice how little control we have over our mind and do not always realize how this affects how we act. Unless a person knows how to give order to thoughts, attention will be attracted to whatever is most problematic at the moment, such as pain. Survivors of sex trafficking need healthy tools to move beyond the trauma that consumes their attention and hinders them from healing.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) said that creativity allows individuals to explore their beliefs and lifestyles in a symbolic way. This process helps uncover unconscious motivations for behavior and allows for an experience that may challenge unhealthy patterns of thinking that came from the influence of unhealthy environments. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described how living a fulfilling life involves learning how to join all one's experiences into a meaningful pattern. This accomplishment helps a person feel in control of their life and make sense of their experiences. This allows women to focus on what truly matters rather than living out of fear and under unhealthy expectations placed on them by perpetrators, society, and/or family. Survivors of sex trafficking can benefit from flow activities, such as art therapy, to explore their lifestyle, debunk the lies that they were entrapped in during their experiences in sexual exploitation, and to rediscover the joy of living purposefully on their terms and motivated by their unique interests (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

Sex trafficking is a global concern in our world today that cannot be ignored. Barriga (2013) declared that sex trafficking is a form of modern day slavery and violates human dignity and rights. The circumstances around entry and entrapment into sex trafficking varies case by case for women and girls, but the greed of perpetrators and demand of consumers is known to fuel this criminal industry across borders. It is important to recognize that women and girls who

are or were in sex trafficking face societal and cultural stigmatization that hinders their healing process and presents challenges to begin a new life that is considered normal and wholesome.

Women and girls need to be viewed as empowered survivors capable of rising above psychological and physiological consequences of their traumatic experiences. Mental health consequences will vary from survivor to survivor because of their unique personality, Life Style, perceptions, and experiences within sex trafficking. Trauma-informed approaches and responsive actions are essential to enable survivors to process and reconstruct their traumatic memories as well as work towards positive coping skills and learning how to live a purpose filled life. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow provides insight into living a meaningful life with intentionality rather than settling for a life lived in survival mode or complacency. Creative flow in art therapy is relevant to helping survivors of trafficking because it offers opportunity for survivors to engage in a rewarding experience where they gain self-awareness, understanding, personal strengths and talents, and can begin to imagine the possibility of a life filled with joy. As survivors of sex trafficking regain control over their inner and outer lives, they can begin to decide what their lives will be like and work towards a beautiful life beyond the pain.

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Appendix A:

A Guide for Facilitating Creative Flow in Art Therapy Sessions for Survivors of Sex Trafficking

This guide presents and explains five beneficial concepts of the creative flow experience that can be integrated into art therapy sessions to help survivors of sex trafficking in their healing journey. The five creative flow concepts explored in this guide include: 1) regaining a sense of control; 2) focused attention; 3) discovering strengths and mastering challenges; 4) goals, purpose, and vision; and 5) enjoyment. Subheadings for the practical application of the five flow concepts are paired with Adlerian terms taken from Griffith and Powers (2007), Adlerian Psychology is woven into the guidelines. Information about the flow experience and identification of the following five concepts for this guide was derived from the works of Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1997). Effective work with survivors of sex trafficking and awareness of survivors' needs was gained from the works of Grant (2014) and Lloyd (2011). This guide is not a list of specific art therapy directives. The purpose is to offer insight into the healing benefits of creative flow when working with survivors of sex trafficking. Whether through a more directive or open studio approach, professionals can incorporate the vision of these five concepts of creative flow in their art therapy practice to support survivors as they process their trauma, rediscover their value, and regain hope for a future full of purpose, wholeness, and joy.

1) Regaining a Sense of Control

- *Sense of Self*- Survivors need to move beyond the role of perpetual victim by regaining control and ownership over their lives. The creative art flow process allows for self-reflection according to a survivor's own pace of processing new information gained from

the art and flow experience. Creative art flow offers multiple opportunities for survivors to redefine who they are and take control over determining a new integrated sense of self.

- *Learning Novel Skills*- Survivors gain a sense of control by learning novel skills.

Allowing survivors to explore with art materials and learn about different art techniques can equip them with basic skills such as, but not limited to, construction of materials, qualities of art mediums, and experimentation with new ideas. Novel skills explored through the creative art flow process empowers survivors to challenge themselves to stretch their skills and equips them with knowledge about their abilities that they can use in all areas of their lives. Learning novel art skills in a non-judgmental environment also assists in helping survivors enter into a state of flow and de-intensifies the effects of frustration so they can produce creations of self-expression with a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment.

- *Predictability*- Survivors need predictability and a security in their environment to feel safe enough to enter into a state of being in flow where their attention is diverted from danger alertness. Surviving the unpredictable and often dangerous life with sex trafficking demands that victims are fully alert to any coming threats. Establishing predictable routines, rituals, and rules within art therapy sessions allows survivors to expect the flow of the creative sessions. These predictable expectations allow survivors to feel a sense of control in their space and gives them the freedom to focus on art flow rather than fear.

- *Internal rather than External*- Survivors regain control over their lives as they realize that this ultimately comes from internal changes versus external changes. External changes in conditions, such as the rescue out of sex trafficking and being placed in a safe house, are

essential aspects of the healing journey, but survivors quickly become aware that a change in environment will not automatically give them peace of mind or self-control. Exploration of themes of the internal and external through creative art flow experiences can help provide insight for how survivors can attempt to gain control over their thinking and attitudes.

- *Making Choices*- When in the life of sex trafficking, survivors usually have no control even over the smallest of decisions in their lives. Facilitating an art therapy environment that allows survivors to engage in creative art of their choosing is vital. This allows them to regain a sense of control and confidence in their decision-making skills and autonomy. As survivors make both spontaneous and pre-meditated choices throughout their creative art flow experience, they experience freedom. There is freedom in making one's own choices.
- *Encouraging Atmosphere*- Positive, uplifting, and accepting feedback from professionals throughout survivors' creative art flow experiences creates an encouraging atmosphere. An encouraging atmosphere allows survivors to experiment with art materials in an environment free from negative and degrading control. An encouraging environment where survivors free to make mistakes as well as accomplishments in safety is essential for survivors to build up the courage to manage the control they have over their life choices.

2) Focused Attention

- *Distraction from Stressors*- Survivors have many stressors that pull for their attention, such as court issues, recovery, and family matters. The process of engaging in creative art flow experiences refines individuals' abilities to focus all their concentration on the

most present task at hand. Distraction from stressors is a healthy way for survivors to redirect their mind to what is most important. This redirection also helps them detach from overwhelming emotions of stress so they can make more balanced, less emotionally charged decisions. Creative art flow creates a training ground environment where survivors sharpen their skills of focusing their attention, prioritizing, and developing coping skills that distract them from stressors. Attention skills developed in repetitive art flow experiences can better equip survivors to handle and accomplish the many demands in their life.

- *Core beliefs*-Therapeutic attention should be focused on working through issues that are relevant and identified for the individual client. For survivors of sex trafficking, the multi-layered and cumulative trauma can be overwhelming. There can also be lack of clarity for both professionals and clients when distinguishing symptoms from root problems. As survivors engage in the art flow process, their self-guarding defenses lower and unconscious life themes and core beliefs often emerge through the art. This insight about core beliefs can open space for survivors to make connections between the art and the truth of their reality. Creative flow experiences can draw out the unconscious core beliefs that disrupt survivors' level of functioning and bring them into awareness at a conscious level. Appropriate attention can then be focused on root problems to help survivors advance in their personal healing journey.
- *Flow*- Creative art flow experiences enable survivors to be in a state of deep concentration. The benefit of this type of focused attention is that it helps survivors' conscious thinking be well ordered and flow in a way that makes sense and integrates the self.

- *Cathartic Relief*- Pain and overwhelming feelings flood in when survival mode is disengaged in a physically safe environment. The innate nature of creative art flow provides cathartic relief and redirection from uncontrollable feelings. Breaking the cycle of pain with a healthy and productive activity can help survivors' gain skills to seek out flow-inducing activities in their life when they feel overtaken by emotions. The experience of cathartic relief in the context of creative art flow instills hope in survivors that there is escape from the enslavement of negativity and pain based on where they focus their attention.
- *Mindfulness*- A goal of guiding survivors into a state of flow through art making is to help them learn how to focus their attention at will. This ability to be fully present and attentive is an act of mindfulness. Physical and emotional pain tends to absorb survivors' full attention making it harder to be mindful and at calm throughout daily life. As survivors learn to make decisions that redirect their attention to positive and soothing activities, they discover the strength of mindfulness that enables them to focus on that which will help them get through difficult situations. Where they choose to focus their attention will determine the quality of their life.

3) Discovering Strengths and Mastering Challenges

- *Strengths*- Survivors often feel that their work in sex trafficking is the only thing they are good at. Art making allows survivors to discover new talents, interests, and strengths as they engage in art flow experiences. Creative art flow is strengths-based in its approach.
- *Shattering Constraints*- The stress of time constraint can be debilitating and discouraging. Depending on the circumstances, many survivors have the challenge of time constraints when attempting to accomplish certain tasks, such as in legal court situations. Creative

art flow shatters constraints of time in conscious awareness. As survivors engage in the flow of art making, time is no longer relevant as they master the challenges of tasks. This process allows them to feel a sense of mastery over time. The purpose of developing these skills is to help survivors learn to endure and achieve as they focus on action towards accomplishing tasks rather than on constraints.

- *Identifying Solutions-* As survivors engage in creative art flow, they develop problem-solving skills that help them dissect problems into manageable tasks and identify solutions. Mastering the challenge of managing problems by breaking them down into manageable moments through a state of creative art flow is a unique way to learn how to problem-solve other areas of life. The process of task management refocuses the mind and allows for solutions to be identified in a clearer and more manageable way.
- *Exploring Work Task-* Engagement in the creative art flow process can help survivors identify and acknowledge instinctual talents and growing abilities. Identifying talents and abilities are an integral part of exploring work task. Discovery of their strengths can help survivors feel a sense of unique value that may never have been recognized before and provide inspiration for future careers or involvements.
- *Intrinsic Motivation-* Artwork that survivors create and complete, even if the process isn't always pleasant, becomes a source of pride and joy. Feelings of accomplishment, pride, and joy intrinsically motivate survivors to work on other projects in art that provide appropriate challenge according to their current and growing skill set. Intrinsic motivation built up through the creative flow process can help survivors as work harder in other areas of life with greater confidence and competence.

- *Independence*- Survivors often believe the lies that they are not capable of surviving on their own and without the provision of their pimp. The creative flow process allows them to discover the strengths they possess to do things independently. As survivors realize that their ideas and artworks were made by their own efforts, they regain a sense of independence and value. Being in states of art flow helps them understand they can do what they put their mind to do, they are capable of generating good ideas, and they are uniquely gifted.
- *Embracing Fears*- Survivors are venturing into fears of the unknown as they struggle to imagine life outside of the known territory of sex trafficking. Venturing into the flow of art making may also be unknown or uncomfortable for survivors, because the challenges may seem greater than their skills. Helping survivors enter into a state of flow with meaningful projects can encourage them to attempt to try something new, enable them to build their skills to overcome preconceived challenges, and realize the satisfaction of creative accomplishments. Overcoming obstacles in art flow experiences can become parallels to how survivors can utilize their growing strengths to face the unknown, embrace their fears, and dare to imagine good outcomes for their future
- *Self-Actualization*- The potential of survivors is usually unrealized, buried, and often imprisoned by fear. Without opportunities to explore their potential, their talents may never be fully developed. Engagement in creative art flow can help survivors achieve self-actualization as they observe their own potential in action, pacify fears of failure through the development of healthy coping skills, and rekindle a desire to learn more about who they are.

4) Goals, Purpose, and Vision

- *Authentic Congruence*- Goals and vision are achieved through unity of self, purpose, and determination. As survivors are engaged in art flow experiences, their thoughts, feelings, and intentions are harmoniously focused on the same goal in a state of authentic congruence. This state of being wholly focused on a productive goal is the epitome of being in a state of flow. These flow experiences can motivate survivors to pursue other activities and goals in which their entire self is in harmony with the same vision.
- *Encouragement*- Survivors' expectations of rapid positive change in themselves and in their life circumstances are often let down because these changes do not happen quickly. Mundane reality and the challenges of healing from trauma may cause survivors to doubt that change is possible. Some survivors may become discouraged and state that they do not even want to change. The creative art flow experience is a method of encouragement to help survivors place discouraged feelings aside and lower their self-guarding defenses as they engage in an inspirational flow of art making. With defenses lowered, survivors may be more open to express frustrations as well as discover new insight that renews their sense of determination to put in the effort to work towards a life of healing.
- *Purpose*- Creative art flow experiences can help survivors find ways to fill their time with purpose-driven activities. As they continue to explore their purpose and interests, they may create a vision for what they want to do or be. Visions, purpose, and life goals discovered in the creative art flow experience can be continually defined and refined in the art therapy process to impassion survivors to make their dreams a reality. Flow experiences are considered successful when an individual's interests, motivation, and talents are utilized in a purposeful manner. Art therapy prompts that encourage survivors

to explore and entertain possibilities of future pursuits can help motivate survivors to enter into creative flow. Development of creative ideas are enhanced when survivors are in a state of flow and unknown desires pop out through the process to offer life vision for a purpose filled life.

- *Self-Care-* Survivors are used to the demands of taking care of others, such as pimps, boyfriends, and “customers” who do not pay attention to or care about the survivors’ needs or desires. Creative art flow gives survivors an opportunity for self-care as they focus on their needs, interests, and dreams. Self-care is not only doing but receiving. Facilitators of creative art therapy flow sessions can offer encouragement, support, and other soul-refreshing gifts for survivors to receive. It is important to note that this can be hard for some women to simply receive without feeling obliged to pay back the favors, but this is a normal part of the process for survivors to develop a healthy sense of value and self-care. Self-care experiences are not meant to instill self-centeredness, but rather to break the patterns survivors have of existing for someone else’s desires and ignoring their own dreams. Self-care opportunities throughout the creative art flow process may also serve as a prevention intervention so that they do not feel their only option and purpose in life is to return to their pimps and serve them.
- *Context-* Creative art flow experiences can give survivors an opportunity to accept and integrate their traumatic experiences into a larger context of the purpose for their life. Helping survivors realize the beauty of living life as a survivor, rather than hiding this aspect of their life narrative, can motivate them towards living with passion to accomplish life goals and even help others with their testimonies.

- *Future Focus Beyond Survival*- Sex trafficking does not offer a hopeful future. Survivors may have a hard time coming up with ideas and visions for their future beyond survival or be resistant to seeing the relevance of exploring their future when their present life is messy and in survival mode. The ability to focus beyond current circumstances is strengthened through practice and cannot be rushed in the learning process. The beauty and challenge of the creative flow process is that it takes time and tasks by nature create a need for more tasks. Tasks yet to be accomplished are what fuel vision and passion. Survivors that continue to engage in creative art flow are likely to encounter visions for their projects which can eventually lead into the enlightenment of a larger vision for their life. The process can help survivors understand that patience is needed throughout their journey.
- *ER's*- Mosak and Di Pietro (2006) explained that Early Recollections are stories of events before the age of 10 that individuals *say* occurred. ERs are full of symbols, metaphors, and emotions that relate to individuals present perspective of their life and their behavior (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). As ERs are explored, insight into how individuals perceive themselves, others, and the world can be brought to light (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). Creative art flow can be a natural way of allowing survivors to explore imagery, themes, and feelings through more than just words. The recollection of ERs requires concentration on childhood memories and creative art flow can help provide this focused state of mind. ERs for survivors of sex trafficking may be disturbing or overwhelming as many have experienced trauma from early ages. The benefit of using art in ERs can help provide a sense of containment and allow survivors to explore ERs at their own pace as reproduce their memories. The purpose of prompting survivors to share ERs through

creating image making and verbal expression is to help survivors gain self-awareness into the intentions of their behavior and emotions. The hope is that this awareness will provide survivors with the opportunities to be mindful of how they make decisions and will help them understand their deepest needs and how these can be met through healthy means.

- *Belonging*- Many survivors become motivated by the injustices they have experienced and desire to help other people who have had the same unfortunate experiences. Creative art flow can be a way for survivors to creatively brainstorm solutions to problems where they can make a difference. A clear idea of a problem in need of a solution is a key element of commitment and entry into a state of flow. Courage and commitment built up through the creative art flow process can empower survivors to confront injustice and take a stand in their areas of passion. A sense of belonging and contribution to the greater society is essential to a survivor leading a fulfilling life.

5) Enjoyment

- *Passion*- Flow helps make experiences more enjoyable because of the deep concentration on the work and the self-confidence that comes from developing skills. Focus and self-confidence in one's work leads to and is fueled by passion. As survivors engage in creative art flow, they will discover unique passions that provide a sense of satisfaction, life purpose, motivation, and enjoyment. Survivors need opportunities to feel passion for people, life, work, and future goals that is not entangled in unproductive anger. The creative art flow experience not only offers opportunities for survivors to gain self-awareness of what they are passionate about, but also gives them creative outlets to begin channeling their passions into constructive designs.

- *Overcoming Resistance*- Survivors may be resistant to positive feelings such as enjoyment and believe they are incapable of joy. Many survivors believe the lies they've heard that they can't be happy without their pimp. The creative art flow process can help survivors overcome their fears or resistance to joy. A benefit of art in this context is that it is active, interactive, and provides survivors with hands-on opportunities to practice overcoming emotional and tangible challenges in relation to resistance to happiness.
- *Rewarding*- Engaging in creative art flow is meant to be exciting and rewarding. The creative process will help survivors continue to be creative in their thinking and to seek enjoyable, new possibilities throughout their life.
- *Personal Fulfillment*- Sex trafficking is a money driven business. Anxiety around how they will make money may cause survivors to go back to trafficking because it is known. To prevent this, women need to not only learn other job skills, but learn to be motivated by more than just money. An outcome of the creative art flow process is learning to enjoy what one is doing so that the driving factor to achieve goals is enjoyment, purpose, and personal fulfillment. These experiences of enjoyment can help survivors look for ways to provide for themselves without the main focus being financial gain.
- *Discoveries*- Enjoyment is characterized by forward movement towards new discoveries, accomplishment, and stretching one's abilities. The process of discovering and creating something new is one of the most enjoyable activities individuals can engage in. Creative art making that is too challenging can be discouraging, but art activities that are not challenging enough lead to boredom and inhibit flow. It is important to facilitate flow inducing art activities that gently challenge survivors in their endeavors through

meaningful theme content or engaging artistic techniques as they discover more about themselves and the world.

- *Fun*- Playing with ideas and experimenting with art materials can be exhilarating and fun. Survivors need the freedom to play in state of creative flow where worry and stress are not the dominate preoccupations. Art flow that is fun due to theme content, art materials, or interaction with others can help break negative cycles and depressive states of mind. Creative art flow is conducive to creating a fun environment for women to experience enjoyment.
- *Curiosity*- Enthusiasm and curiosity is key to the creative flow experience. Art therapy prompts that inspire survivors to self-sustain their curiosity can help them follow through on tasks and look for enjoyable elements to their experience. Enthusiasm for learning, maintaining a sense of openness to new experiences, and being curious according to their own interests can encourage survivors to incorporate this approach into their everyday style of life.