



# Mentalizing in Arts Therapies

*Marianne Verfaillie*

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## **Mentalizing in Arts Therapies** Marianne Verfaillie

This book describes the use of therapeutic art, music, and dance interventions against a background of mentalization, thus forging a link between arts therapies and mentalization-based treatment. This book has its roots in the theory of Mentalization Based Treatment by Antony Bateman and Peter Fonagy, and combines the broad experience of many art therapists with art, music and dance/movement therapy in psychiatric settings in the treatment of adults and adolescents both individually and in groups, as well as children with disorganised attachment. As a treatment concept, mentalization is quite straightforward because mentalizing is a typically human ability. As Bateman and Fonagy (2012) say: "Without mentalizing there can be no robust sense of self, no constructive social interaction, no mutuality in relationships, and no sense of personal security". On the other hand, it is not so simple to fully grasp the significance of mentalization.

Mentalization-based therapy is a specific type of psychotherapy designed to help people reflect on their own thoughts and feelings and differentiate them from the perspectives of others. This explicit verbal form of mentalization is preceded by an earlier, more fragile stage of implicit interactive affect regulation as the mind opens up to mentalization. Physically dealing with art mediums, movements or musical sounds is one way of representing this implicit self-regulation. It is an immediate way in which to evaluate thoughts and feelings on nonverbal sensorimotor, perceptual and symbolic levels. When clients work with nonverbal means such as art, movement or music in a way that focuses specifically on affect regulation and mentalization, it gives them an opportunity to grow mentally, even if they have a mild intellectual disability. In this book, the author has attempted to tailor the description of mentalization to the work of arts therapists, and to make it more readily recognisable by her liberal use of image material.

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