

Ph. D. Thesis

# An Ontological Inquiry into the experience of Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy

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## Abstract

The inquirer acknowledges that the body and mind are related while experiencing breathing and body sensations and practicing yoga and meditation. In addition, when meeting clients, the inquirer, an art therapist, perceived that body movement, meditation, and artwork could cooperate in promoting both physical and mental health.

For this reason, the inquirer was confident and learned to integrate body movement, meditation, and art therapy in researching Rappaport's (2009) Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy and directly participating as a client.

This inquiry examined the contents and process of the inquirer's experience the Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy as the client and the performance of three participants.

By adopting an ontological inquiry method, the inquirer intended to reveal the process of perceiving body sense through therapy and experiencing the true self by self-expression. Including the inquirer, the inquiry selected four participants who wanted to resolve somatization problems, expressive power, or emotional expression.

The therapist performed Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy from April 2020 to May 2021: July 2020 to January 2021 with Hee-dong (pseudonym) and February 2021 to April 2021 with Sunflower and Si-min Chae (pseudonym). Additionally, the inquiry conducted three sessions of follow-up interviews with participants and their guardians. The inquirer noted the process and contents of the therapist and the participants. And the inquirer wrote field journals, recorded the therapist's feelings and the participants' responses, and took pictures of physical motions, artwork created in the therapy, and the therapist's belongings. Among them, the story of sunflowers is summarized.

The inquirer organized Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy into five courses: focusing and mindfulness practice, examining self, exploring significant themes, feeling and expressing these themes again, and changing feelings, emotions and thoughts. There were four categorized themes in the therapy experience stories in this process: the autobiographical narrative of the therapist, a child's story about communicating with the body sense, the story of a grandmother who lived with bated her breath, and the story of a housewife who wanted to live a peaceful life.

The meanings of the experience of this inquiry were as follows. The first one was that various media helped expression. Movements, art expressions, sounds, and words enabled easy and free expression.

The second meaning was feeling life experience, realizing and changing physically. The bodily sensation change was through imagination and emerging images, encountering media, and mindfulness.

The third meaning was being aware of self and practicing change. Expressive art activities in the inquiry session reflected current situations and emotions and guided them to perceive self and surroundings in examining results.

The last meaning was continuing to adapt and change in life. Although the inquiry participants lived in given situations, Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy provided them an opportunity to practice change in their lives.

## Background

Focusing psychotherapy, which is related to the body and inner circulation, focuses on emotions and perceptions by feeling emotions such as anxiety, nervousness, anger, and disgust with the body and finding their identity. Gendlin, the founder of focusing, accepted the communication pattern of human-centered psychotherapy and created an inner path as a communication channel to promote growth and healing. Therefore, focusing is called the gateway to the wisdom of the body (Joo Eun-sun, Jo Byeong-ju, 2012).

Focusing and mindfulness are treated separately in many studies, and mindfulness has been introduced to help the process of focusing or focusing has been introduced to help the process of mindfulness. Rome (2014) studied a method of Mindful Focusing that combines mindfulness and focusing. Rudnick (2021) introduced the Focusing method as a method of mindfulness, and said that it is necessary to stay in a state of mindfulness, use felt sense, and stay in self-compassion and a kind attitude to find the right distance of the mind. Gibbs (2021) said that meditation and Focusing can be used together, and that Focusing is an internal act, and asking questions about what kind of experience the felt sense comes from can encourage conversation, but meditation helps bring about felt sense, opens the body, and allows it to become broader.

A study that looked at mindfulness, focusing, and art therapy from an integrated and in-depth perspective attempted to deal with the process of change between life adapted to social values, the relevance of the body, and internal desires using Rappaport's (2009) focusing art therapy with body sensations and deep images (Shin Min-ju, Choi Seon-nam, 2021). In this study, we will explore Rappaport's (2009) thematic art therapy method that combines Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness, focusing, and art therapy in this context. The researcher had a healing experience while approaching mindfulness focusing art therapy. We will share the process of clarifying this researcher's experience and questions in the course of the study with the participants and conduct this study as an ontological exploration in which healing and awareness can change together. The process of exploring one's life while expressing the body's sensations in various media during each meditation process will be a journey that the researcher and the participants go through together. In ontological inquiry, the lives of the participants and the researcher are connected in the question of existence (Lee Min-jeong, 2015; Park Eun-mi, 2014; Jang Hyeon-jeong, 2017; Son Il-sook, 2014). Through this study, we will examine and explore the lives of the researcher and the

participants and examine the meaning and value of relational life.

## Goal

We studied the process of Client's experiencing emotional expression while experiencing mindfulness-focusing art therapy. Based on that, we want to study the process of finding one's own existence. We would like to introduce the story of one of them in this chapter.

1. What do the researcher and the client experience through mindfulness-focusing art therapy?
2. What is the meaning that the researcher and the client experienced in mindfulness-focusing art therapy?

## Conclusion

### 1. Ontological inquiry

Humans are beings of a semantic dimension who ultimately pursue meaning. Humans are beings who constantly think, feel, react, and act in order to find the meaning of their existence. Even though the world exists physically apart, it always penetrates deep into my existence and is connected through the process of interaction. In order to understand myself, I must understand completely the world, and in order to understand the world, I must understand completely myself (Park Se-won, Shin Eun-sun, Shin Gwi-yeon, Jang Jeong-im, Park Joo-hee, 2013). In educational research, Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2006) stated that people create their daily lives by telling stories about who they are and who others are, and by interpreting the past. In the language currently used, they said that stories are the entrances through which individuals enter the world and the doors through which their experiences in the world are interpreted and made personally meaningful, and that research begins from the perspective of human experience.

### 2. process of exploring mindful focusing art therapy and selection of research participants

In ontological inquiry, data is collected and explored through a process of observation, interview, and artifact interpretation to understand the research subject. The researcher obtained and interpreted data through personal experiences, photographs of works, and follow-up interviews obtained while experiencing Focusing Oriented Art Therapy (FOAT) with clients.

### 1) Client information

Sunflower is a woman in her late 60s. She was born as the youngest of three sons and two daughters. She graduated from elementary school and stayed at home after that, following her father's advice that women should not learn much. She got married and She worked mostly in restaurants since her 50s. Her husband is patriarchal and thinks that his opinions must be unconditionally obeyed and followed, so they said that they had a hard time communicating. Due to the belief that women should not come forward, they lived without being able to properly express their desires and emotions. She has poor ability to express emotions and has a somatization problem called 'Hwabyeong<sup>1)</sup>'. When She was young, her father and her husband liked to drink and often got drunk at night. On days when her husband came home after drinking, She was worried that he might have had an accident outside, and She suffered from anxiety because he would find fault with me when he came home. She said that people around her usually say that She looks anxious. She usually have heart palpitations, and when She's angry, She can't speak well, her chest feels tight, and She once went to the emergency room because of an illness. When I began the study, She was depressed due to the death of someone close to me.

In the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS), there are three items in this scale as shown in Table III-6, and the score for each item is 1 to 5. The average score is as shown in Table III-6. Item 1) 'I have difficulty knowing how I feel.' refers to the ability to recognize what emotions one is feeling. Item 2) 'I have difficulty explaining my feelings.' refers to the ability to express emotions to others. Item 3) 'Externally oriented thinking type' evaluates externally oriented thinking. For these three, the higher the score, the more difficult it is to express emotions.

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1) An ailment supposedly caused by one's pent-up resentment and mental depression.

표 III-6. Toronto Average score by item on the Alexithymia Scale (TAS)

	item 1)	item 2)	item 3)
Overall average	17.49	14.48	19.24
Women's average	17.00	14.49	19.70
Male average	18.06	14.48	18.66

The pre-test results of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) showed that Sunflower had a total score of 62, which was 10.8 points higher than the overall average total score, and high scores in all items, indicating that she had difficulty expressing her emotions. Sunflower's scores for each item were 1) 21 points, 2) 19 points, and 3) 22 points.

### 3. Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy

Rappaport's (2009) focusing art therapy, which is a method that combines mindfulness, focusing, and art therapy, has rarely been studied in Korea. It was organized based on the characteristics of the client based on the researcher's research materials such as books, papers, and videos, as well as the experience of participating directly in the focusing art therapy certification course conference and individual art therapy.

Sunflower participated in 12 sessions of Focusing Expressive Art Therapy (FOAT) from February 2021 to April 2021, lasting 70 to 90 minutes per session, and did art therapy in groups of two or individually. When starting art therapy, she first worked on breathing with body movements or feeling through media.

Sessions 1 and 2 are the exercises of expressing felt senses through art media and practicing mindfulness. Sessions 3 and 4 are the exercises of exploring the present and creating a comfortable feeling in order to immerse oneself in art therapy. Sessions 5 to 9 are the exercises of exploring my uncomfortable feelings to become comfortable and talking about problems I want to solve and changing them. Sessions 10 to 12 are the stages of exploring factors that cause negative thoughts and things that help. The goal is to find topics that cause discomfort and find peace of mind by finding answers on your own. The art therapy process is as shown in <Table III-7>.

Table III-7. Sunflower's Mindfulness Focusing- Art Therapy Progress

Week	format	Title	Activity	Material
1	Focusing&Mindful	Expressing felt sense through art	1. GAP(Grounded Awareness Present) 2. Expressing felt sense by drawing	Watercolor, Paper markers, Oil

		material	lines	pastels	
2	Exercise	Expressing sense while breathing	felt while breathing	1. Relieve stress with physical activity 2. GAP(Grounded Awareness Present) 3. Explore felt sense while practicing breathing 4. expressing felt sense	Watercolor, Paper markers , Oil pastels, Clay
3	After feeling safe , explore important topics	Peaceful Place		1. Mindfulness through physical movement 2. Knead and tap the clay to feel the felt sense 3. Breathing with feeling the felt sense	Ceramic clay, Pastels, markers, Paper
4		Clearing A space with Art		1. Mindfulness through physical movement 2. GAP, Breathing with feeling the felt sense	Box, Pastels, markers,
5		Clearing A space with Art II		1. GAP, Felt sensing 2. Feeling and expressing when something uncomfortable Is gone	Clay,oil clay ,Paper Colored pencil
6		Staying that place		1. Recall what we said in the previous session 2. GAP, Felt sensing and art expressing about important topics	Oil pastels, Paper, markers, Colored pencil
7	Re-feeling and expressing important topics	Focusing Attitude		1. Mindfulness through physical movement 2. GAP, Felt sensing and art expressing about important topics 3. To explain the focusing attitude 4. Breathing with feeling the felt sense	Ceramic clay, Paper, markers,
8		Self Care		1. GAP, Felt sensing 2. Breathing with feeling the felt sense and To ask questions about it	Ceramic clay, Watercolor, Oil pastels, Colored pencil paper, cotton ball
9		Staying that place		1.Explain what you feel with a story or picture 2. GAP, Felt sensing and art expressing about important topics	Markers, Oil pastels, Paper
10	Change feelings, emotions,	Source of strength		1. Mindfulness through physical movement 2. GAP, Felt sensing and art expressing	Ceramic clay, Paper, Markers

11	a n d t h o u g h t s based on a given topic	Inner critic	1. Explaining inner critics 2. GAP, Felt sensing about inner critic and art expressing	Paper, Markers, Oil pastels
12		Inner adviser	1. GAP, Felt sensing 2. Guided meditation and art expression	Paper, Colored pencil, Oil pastels

#### 4. The story of a grandmother who lived quietly

The most memorable thing when Sunflower was young was that when She was in elementary school, her sister died on the way to school on a rainy day. Since her father was young, he would not allow sunflowers to go far away, and he had to ask permission to go outside.

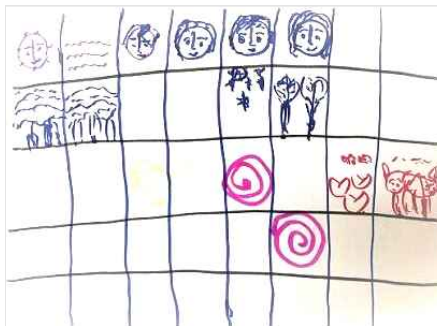
Because she had not lived outside since she was young, she lived without knowing much about the world and lived obediently to her husband, considering him to be heaven. She was always dissatisfied with my husband because he didn't let me spend my money as She wanted. She said that she usually has heart palpitations and that when her husband gets angry or needs to fight, she cannot speak and her chest is so tight that she cannot say anything. Even in my work life, She felt anxious in situations where She had to work quickly, and She was unable to assert myself and was under a lot of stress.

Sunflower kept suppressing her emotions, which led to physical illness. The affective factor of somatization is related to aversive mood states. Negative emotionality causes us to pay attention to minor physical symptoms and interpret them in a negative way, and this tendency can cause somatization by amplifying and perceiving physical sensations.(Gray, 1982; Tellegen, 1985, requoted). Focusing on feeling and expressing felt sense is said to be effective for alexithymia (Eun-seon Joo, Woo Choi, 2013). People with alexithymia fail to regulate their emotions because they are unable to accurately recognize or name their emotions and are unable to express their emotions verbally. During the focusing process, she gained confidence in expressing herself through the experience of finding her felt sense with a counselor and clarifying unclear characteristics. Sunflower was taking a break from work due to the coronavirus and described her situation as 'comfortable.' She said it was good to live with an empty mind and talked about the tight situation.

## 1) Talking oppressed with artistic expression

While doing art therapy with sunflowers, I found out that emotional expression was suppressed. The felt sense can be visualized through art media in Focusing art therapy. . It can provide a safe distance for clients who are afraid to hold back on emotions or approach them(Rappaport, 2016). I was able to get closer to the emotions little by little through felt sense in focusing oriented arttherapy with Sunflower.

If we look at the life of a sunflower, there were many times when it endured by trying to please others and being patient. In the process of expressing with art, her life, dissatisfaction, and desire appeared.. Drawing the line in Figure IV-47] She made a square by drawing lines at equal intervals on the left and right with a marker pen and drew a small picture inside it.The faces of my husband, myself, and my children are drawn inside the square. The straight lines looked stiff. I thought She was hard to express what herfelt. Sunflowersaid that they try to be comfortable and talied about her situation. she said she was okay and talked about her difficulties



figureIV-47. Expressing the senses with the lines

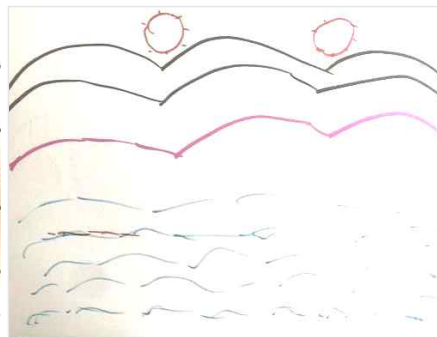


figure IV-48. The sea and the sun

Today, She said that he felt comfortable and that She felt that feeling in her chest. She expressed the feeling of comfort as the sea and the sun in Figure IV-48]. The feeling that had been anxious and sad became comfortable. When he felt the feeling again, it was a feeling of something going down without a sound. Sunflower like to look at the sky, so when She go to work or after work, look at the dawn moon, the evening moon, the morning sun from the rooftop.

The Sunflower expressed the difficult feelings she had with her husband and her

work. As she felt it again, her heart sank like when she say a wish to the sun and the moon.

## 2) Look at the anxiety of life

I thought it was necessary to learn about what focusing art therapy is. So she focused on the feeling of her body and breathed, expressed of body felt sense with colors. As she was mindful breathing, her anxiety subsided and she felt warm in her body. It was as if a difficult experience was becoming comfortable along with the feeling of her body.

As She practiced breathing meditation, her body became comfortable. her hands, which had been cold from working from morning till late at night, became warm and her anxious mind calmed down. She said that meditation would help when She was angry. She expressed the feeling in her body at that time in the colors of Figure IV-49, which represented good blood circulation and a calm mind.

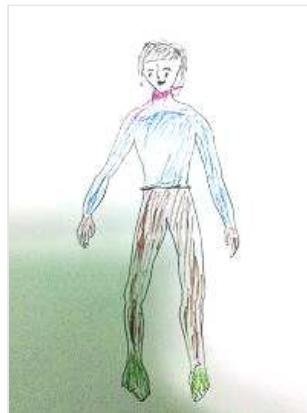


figure IV-49. Feeling of the body

As She felt of the body felt sense and felt the body again, the body feeling changed, and his mind changed accordingly. On the first day, She said that She felt stuffy in the room and was worried about whether to continue participating in the study or quit. On the second day, the researcher wore a new bright-colored coat and said that the sunflower felt bright and comfortable. Her head became clearer, and his hands, which had been cold from soaking them in cold water for a long time and working in the restaurant, felt warm as the blood flowed better. He said that the instabilities he had felt in his life became 'settle down' and that her felt comfortable and let go from head to toe.

Sunflower felt anxious and uncomfortable even when she was working. She worked at a store, and the boss said some hurtful things to her. At those times, she felt anxious and couldn't say anything, suffered alone. She felt like she was always being chased because she had to work quickly. Sunflower said her heart

was always racing. She said she felt anxious when she had to work quickly at a restaurant. She felt calm and comfortable because she had been 2-3 weeks off from work lately (because of COVID-19). When she got a call to come to work, she wanted to quit, but she couldn't say anything. It was because she had a strong demand by her boss that her boss close the store if she didn't come to work, and her husband didn't pay her well. (Session 1)

Sunflower said that people often told her that she seemed anxious. Another anxiety Sunflower felt as a child was that her father would get drunk at night. Even when she was young,



Figure IV-50. Look at the stars

she liked looking at the sky. Looking at the sky, she thought that she would live comfortably without worries someday, and this is shown in Figure IV-50]. On days when her father came home drunk she was able to sleep at home after he fell asleep.

Sunflower : We lived honestly, But I was always anxious because my father would yell when he drank, and it was the same even after I got married. I thought I would marry someone who didn't drink, but I couldn't. My husband comes home at dawn. I think I want to have a comfortable and happy mind without worries while looking at the stars and clouds in the night sky.. (session 6)

My husband loved alcohol and friends, and on days when he came home drunk, I worried and feared he'd cause an accident or be found guilty. I described that feeling as a pounding heart. The husband, who is four years older than her, thought that his wife,

a woman, should always obey his instructions, and because she was so oppressed in the past and her husband was so strong, she was always anxious, scared, and trembled when she looked into his eyes.

By feeling the medium and her body, she was able to create a comfortable state of mind and express my emotions. As she worked with clay, touching it with my hands, kneading it, and feeling its soft and comfortable feel, her mind also changed. She continued to laugh out loud as she touched and tapped the clay. She laughed, saying it felt like hitting her husband by hitting the clay with her hand. After working of Figure IV-51], She said he was 'comfortable' and revealed many of his secret feelings that She had never expressed before. She said that while working at the store, She always felt like he was being chased, but her unstable mind was now at ease.



FigureIV-51. Peaceful place

Sunflower: I feel good. It's soothing, and my stress seems to have completely melted away. I feel like my heart is softening. I've always lived a life of uncertainty, so it's nice and relaxing. When guests come over, I'm completely out of my mind. I'm always being chased, so now that I'm learning and doing things here, I feel at ease and happy.

In Sunflower's life, past anxieties were thought to have exacerbated her anxiety, preventing her from coping with them in the present. Sunflower's physical sensations were transformed, her pent-up emotions were released, and she found peace of mind.

### 3) Saying what the body couldn't express

The sunflower couldn't say anything that hurting others, and she kept it in her heart became a disease. Her mind became bright and free after experiencing<Clearing a space>.

She thought she needed to change to live a brighter life, and as she looked back at herself, She gradually began to take care of herself.

Sunflower suffered from a ‘Hwabyeong<sup>1)</sup>’ after getting married. She had saved up the money She had worked hard and put it in her pillow, but her husband got drunk and refused to get out of the taxi and spent the money on taxi fare. If She said anything to her husband, he’d be in an uproar. So She was speechless and heartbroken. The body speaks for the sunflower’s pressured heart.

Sunflower: It said I had a Hwabyeong<sup>1)</sup>. The hospital said it couldn't be cured....  
Even now, when my husband gets angry and curses, I can't speak, my mouth trembles, and my heart pounds. (session 12)

She recalled the feeling of working with clay during the previous session and said that it feels freshing, and she told the story of how she helped her husband break his drinking habit. Her husband called home and asked for money for the car, but She told him “if you didn’t have money, come on foot” And She didn’t give him the money. She said he never did that again, and She was delighted.(Session 4)

While imagining leaving something uncomfortable, She felt and expressed the space inside me. If you fall from making it uncomfortable, you can think of something else and find it. Sunflower talked a lot about her husband. She has been obedient to her husband for decades, and she resented him saying he wasn’t for her, and she tried to tell him how she felt, but she failed repeatedly. Such frustration was worked on and talked about in Figure IV-52.

Sunflower: I have to say that you did a good job to my husband. The house became noisy, so now I can't do it no matter how much I try, and I just feel like I have to empty my mind and live.

R: To empty your mind means that you thought, "I can't do this."

Sunflower: hahaha. Sometimes I go outside saying, "I have to endure it." But I think He've changed a lot these days.

R: Have you ever had a proper conversation?

Sunflower: When we talk, we can't talk because He is always right....

R: What kind of painting is it?

Sunflower: It's my wish that my husband and I go to the mountains and talk a lot and live respectfully with each other. (Session 4)

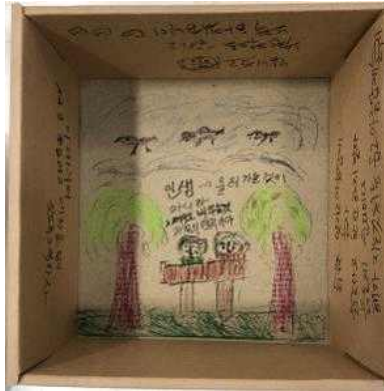


Figure IV-52. Conversation

When the researcher saw the sunflower, which continues to complain and resent her husband while performing art therapy, I thought she hated her husband, but she often expressed her presence with her husband and thought she was in love with him while talking about him. The sunflower wanted to travel with her husband and shared a conversation with her husband. She felt relieved after imagining that she let something uncomfortable flow into the river while Clearing a space. As a result, the heart that ran became a little more comfortable.

Sunflowers have been kept inside and couldn't say what she want to say. Because she couldn't say heartbreaking things to others. She hope to live brightly in the future. After dropping the feeling of wanting to avoid, She felt the feeling of a decent space. It feels comfortable, clean and bright. It is shown in Figure IV-53. Sunflowers like bright colors, but she said her husband was dark. It would be comfortable if they were separated. In the future, she said she should talk about what she had to do and take care of herself.



Figure IV-53. bright feeling

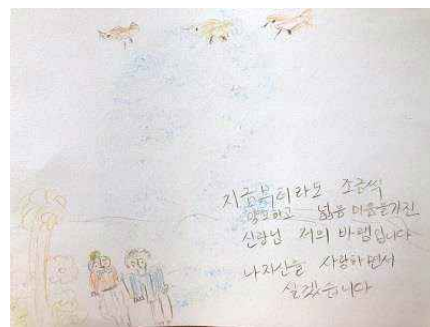


Figure IV-54. free like a bird

Sunflower: It's so relaxing because I dropped it.

R: When you felt the feeling, what did you feel?

Sunflower: The feeling is uneasy, but somehow comfortable.

R: Yes. I told you to distance yourself from the discomfort and just feel the feeling.

Sunflower: It comes to comfort. I always think of yellow. If you look at my husband, he is not a bright color, but a dark color. When my husband is by my side, I feel secure like a pillar, but there is an uncomfortable feeling somewhere. I think it's more comfortable for me to be apart. (Session 5)

Sunflower said that she wanted to live brightly, distancing herself from the uncomfortable things, like the colors in Figure IV-53. She said that she is meticulous by nature and that negative thoughts linger for a long time. There were many times when she couldn't eat, suffered alone, and felt sick, filled with negative thoughts. She said that when she tried to let go of her frustration, her spirits seemed to ease a little. As in Figure IV-54, she felt like she was flying into the sky like a bird. I'd been living imprisoned at her husband's behest, but she longed to be free. It felt beautiful and comforting.

R: Imagine letting go of something that's bothering you. Feel it again inside this box.

How does it feel in your body?

Sunflower: I feel like my heart is sinking.

R: How would you describe it? In a word, what would it be?

Sunflower: I feel like I'm flying into the sky like a bird.

Sunflower: Sometimes I have thoughts like this. I want to be a bird, fly wherever I want, and fly high. I told my kids that too. I said that when I die, don't bury me in the ground, just scatter my ashes. I want to fly wherever I want and fly alone. Don't bury my husband and me in the ground together. I told my sons and daughters that my husband and I want to be apart. (Session 5)

Sunflower said that she quit her restaurant job during the study period, as she wished. She said she'd been anxious as a child due to her father's drinking, but she longed to live a carefree life, free from worry. Feeling anxious about her family's drinking, she tried to stay it.

Sunflower: It's quiet and comfortable. Yes, I feel at peace with what you say. Speaking of color, it's the blue of the sky. The calm sea always reminds me to work harder. I always wonder, is it because of my shortcomings that my husband is so sidetracked? I shouldn't blame him, but I should also try to live with a sense of responsibility and repentance. But when I'm angry, things don't go so well. (session 6)

Her anxiety at work stopped when she quit my job. And she felt more at ease as the

feeling of worry when she had as a child changed. She started to think that she needed to work hard and change her life. Sunflower has lived a busy, nonstop life. And in the process of self-expression, she've reflected her mind and body. She've realized that she've suffered many emotional wounds and physical injuries throughout her life.

But because she have a long-held own lifestyle, it's not easy to immediately put a resolution into practice. When she actually tried to do it, she felt it was unfamiliar, a waste of money, and a sense of shame about going out and eating alone. She regretted not being able to enjoy the good things and she wanted to eat when she was younger. This feeling of guilt only fueled her resentment toward her husband.

#### **4) Let go of things that have become stuck in her life.**

Sunflower was so stressed that her teeth receded and had to be pulled. Art therapy helped her find peace of mind, and as the tension dissolved, her gums no longer felt irritated. She was so anxious that she have been went to the emergency room in the middle of the night. But participating in this study allowed her to let go of what was inside her. She said she also meditates at home, following the researcher's instructions.

For Sunflower, the bathhouse is a space for connecting with others and transforming her mind. She meets friends and gathers with peers. She says wading in the cold water washes away any negative thoughts in her body. For Sunflower, counseling was like a bathhouse. She studied counseling and volunteered in related fields, which allowed her to engage in social life. This allowed her to connect with people and transform her body and mind. She views participating in research as a form of "learning," and she expressed a desire to continue learning diligently.

As She breathed, She focused on the sensations in her body and recalled what She had experienced during the previous session. Her current feeling is that her mind is clearing and the lumps are being washed away like flowing water.

Sunflower: My husband calls me every once in a while, and things like that seem to be changing little by little. I think it's because of his age, but he never comes home empty-handed. He told me to eat something good, and I think it's because I'm not feeling good. He thinks a lot me, and I feel it too. He tells me, "Oh, I'll give in no matter what. I don't do well when I'm angry, but I'll hold it in for just a minute." He seems to like it when I give him lots of praise. When I meditate, I feel warmth in my hands and feet. It's warm,

just a feeling of happiness and comfort, and I forget everything...(Session 7)

When she felt sensing again, she remembered that she would get angry and feel depressed when her husband got angry or said something nonsensical, even though it was nothing special. Even though she was angry, she said that she wanted to hold back and forget the negative thoughts. Imagining herself accepting them again brought her peace of mind. Sunflower had been quite irritable and would often take it out on her children when she was angry.

Sunflower: Something round like a ball. Something round like teeth...

R: Where in your body do you feel it?

Sunflower: In my chest.

R: Are you saying it's not round? Tell me about your feelings about the roundness.

Sunflower: Round like the moon. Always having a peaceful mind helps me to avoid anxiety, and I've been trying to be more understanding of my husband, humbling myself.

R: Have you ever gotten angry and fought a lot?

Sunflower: Now that I think about it, I think I could have just endured it a little longer, but I also had a tendency to try to win. (Session 7)

Sunflower always smiled and shared her innermost thoughts when working with clay. In Figure IV-55, she described feeling a sense of relief when pounding the clay. She said her heart was round and round, like the work itself, and that touching the clay brought her



Figure IV-55. waterfall

peace. Where the water flows, butterflies flutter and there are round shapes. The round shape symbolizes her round heart right now. She also created butterflies above the valley to symbolize her desire to fly here and there.

Sunflower: Teacher, I feel so relieved and happy doing this right now. It feels so refreshing and good.

R: Yes, You had a feeling of injustice before...

Sunflower: The waterfall... I have this in my mind. It feels like it's just gushing out.

R: It's a lump. If you look at it that way, the round thing is a lump.

Sunflower: There's a lump in my chest. After I hit it, it feels like it's flowing down into this calm water. (Session 8)

She realized she'd been feeling so suffocated and had a lot of resentment for so long, that she'd been holding a lot of weight in her heart. As she pounded the clay and the lumps began to go down, she felt like she was speaking more directly about her feelings.

While working with clay in Figure IV-55, she revisited the feelings she had and reflected on her future life. When the researcher observed sunflowers, they drew almost exclusively with marker pens, rarely using color, tended to repeat similar patterns, and even wrote words to express their inner thoughts. To further express their feelings, the researcher had them use watercolor to create Figure IV-56, depicting a rainbow.

Sunflower said that after painting, her mood was washed away, and she felt happy and joyful. She wanted to travel by train and become a butterfly and fly around the world. He said that his dream was to become a teacher, and that his wish came true when he heard the word "teacher" while working as a counseling volunteer. (Session 8)



Figure IV- 56. Feeling of washed away

Sunflower seemed unfamiliar and intimidated by art when she first began art therapy. She

wanted to make sure she was doing it right, asking questions like, “How many colors should I use?” “Can I draw anything?” “Should I draw on paper?” As she participated in the study, she became more comfortable with the process and began expressing feelings she hadn’t been able to express before. And she felt good while doing art activities that she didn’t usually do.

Sunflower: As time passes by here, I gradually begin to express myself and have more things to say, and I thinking of you as a teacher and being grateful to you.

R: You didn't write anything today.

Sunflower: Yes. Do I write in plain text often? Because I'm not good at drawing. But when I drew the picture today, I felt proud.

R: You drew it well.

Sunflower: I feel good when I draw. My mind is completely cleansed. I feel so good.  
(Session 8)

Sunflower, through art therapy, let go of her pent-up emotions and expressed her improved mood through her drawings. She talked about a past experience during art therapy where she had always felt frustrated and angry. As the lump emotions began to subside, she shared her joyful experience of becoming a volunteer counselor and achieving her dream.

## **5) Let me live as the master**

Sunflower strives to discipline herself and cultivate a bright mind. She used to go to a temple about decades ago. So she reads the Lotus Sutra at home. She says that waking up early in the morning, reading for 30 minutes, and praying. It brings peace to her mind. The Lotus Sutra contains life lessons. Sometimes, she even do deep breathing meditation alone at home. Feeling at ease, clear, and bright, she finds herself striving to find happiness despite the difficulties in life.

As the research progressed, Sunflower began to rapidly change for herself. The researcher was afraid of the change that occurred when Sunflower suddenly quit her job and asserted herself. Healing requires a process of change. One day, something that had been blocked suddenly opened up like Figure IV-58, and emotions suddenly overflowed like water from a dam overflowing without limit. The researcher thought that he wanted to control such things by shutting off the overflowing water with the faucet in Figure IV-59. (2021. 4. 20)



Figure IV-58. Dam with a hole



Figure IV-59. Turning off the faucet

One day, on my way to my research site, I observed a sunflower's appearance brightening. As I was walking to the designated location for my art therapy research, I encountered a Sunflower walking by in a decorated outfit. Her face and her expression seemed brighter. She said that she looked brighter in the mirror because she wasn't angry anymore, and people around her were saying the same thing.

Sunflower: Back then, my heart would race and my hands would tremble. People always say I looked anxious. I had to work quickly... (omitted) These days, I find a lot of stability through arttherapy.

When I'm angry, I just hold it in for a little while. When I can control my anger, the house becomes quiet, and when I calm down, I don't get angry when I go out. When I look in the mirror, my face seems much brighter.. (session 10)

While participating in the study, Sunflower became aware of her emotions and desires through art therapy, and her behavior changed. I believe her brightening face stemmed from her efforts to pursue her own desires and to change her surroundings to make herself more comfortable. Sunflower's desire to change stemmed from a sense of self-importance. After experiencing the sensations of her body and working with clay, she felt a warmth rise from her once-cold face, and everything seemed to become more at ease. As she drew Figure IV-60, she realized she needed to take care of herself.

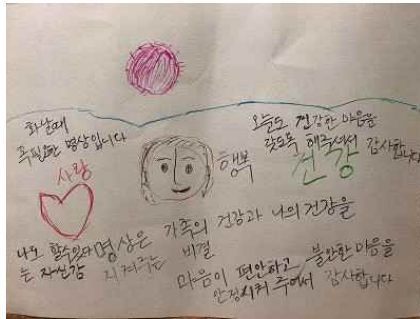


Figure IV-60. Happiness



Figure IV-61. A smiling face

Sunflower: While doing this, I realized that while the most precious people in this world are my family, I also feel precious. I realized that only when I'm happy can my family be healthy and happy, and here, I find my passionate.

R:: How did you become passionate about it?

Sunflower: As I learn little by little, I feel grateful and realize that I need to create happiness myself.(session3)

As the art therapy sessions progressed, Sunflower gradually began to assert herself, realizing the need to take care of herself. Soon after participating in the study, Sunflower quit her job at the store. The owner said she desperately needed someone who could connect with her, but her poor teeth became a good excuse to avoid going to work. Meanwhile, her husband's brother's wife, who was nearly 70 years old, kept calling her to do minor household chores and repairs, which had been frustrating her. She decided to stop.

Learning is important to Sunflower. Expressing about "Inner Strength," she said learning brings happiness and transforms the mind. When she thinks of learning, bright colors and the smiling faces in Figure IV-61 come to mind. She said she enjoys participating in research, believing it's also learning, and shared a recent change she's experienced.

Sunflower: I consider this space my learning space. When it's the 0th day of the week, I come for art therapy, and it's a joyful and happy time. Coming here to meditate feels like my mind has been cleansed. Everything is washed away. My mind feels clear, and my body feels light from head to toe. I love bright colors like sky blue, yellow, and red. (omission)

Sunflower: If I come during this time, meditate with the teacher, and listen to his stories, I'll sleep well that day and feel at ease. Even when I'm just walking, I feel active and happy. I can even share what's on my mind with the teacher.... (session10)

It was while studying counseling that she was able to speak to her husband and her life changed. Sunflower regretted not being able to study much as a child due to her father's opposition, saying that if she had studied just a little more, she wouldn't have met her husband. Even now, despite her age, she continues to learn. With the determination to continue studying in her 60s, Sunflower earned several certifications and volunteered as a counselor. It's been a huge help to herself, too. Even though she's nearing 70, Sunflower is proud of herself for making up for her shortcomings through studying, working, and volunteering.

In "The Inner Critic," She felt the critic within me, breathing deeply. Sunflower said that her personality was criticizing her, and that fighting was futile, and that she felt she needed to live with an empty mind. She felt wronged for living too much to please her husband, so she tried to change him, but she couldn't. That eventually led to a fight.



Figure IV-62. Let's Empty my Mind

After a fight, Sunflower's meticulous nature made it difficult for herself to calm down, so she decided to just empty her mind, as shown in Figure IV-62.

Sunflower: There are times when my heart changes like a rainbow. These days, I've learned to live with an empty mind, not clashing with others, and I've become more enlightened. Until my 50s, I used to fight and live like that, but after meditating and thinking quietly at home, I realize it was all futile. I decided to follow my husband's lead. I can't stop him. He just keeps going in a bad direction. (session11)

What drives her to criticize herself from the outside is her desire to live well. Sunflower reflected that her constant criticism of her husband stemmed from the

feeling she was living a poor life compared to the wealthy people around her. It wasn't necessarily just her husband's actions. Both my husband and I had worked hard, and we decided to let go of the desire to live well.

Throughout her life, She've had many complaints and resentments. She have more days left to live than days ahead, but what She desire and how she live are more important than the past. While meditating on "Inner Advisor," She felt and reflected on the gifts she received. Sunflower felt she had been given a generous heart, and her husband, a thoughtful heart. Then, as shown in Figure IV-63, she said her heart felt as if it had been opened up.

Sunflower: Now I want to speak up and I would like to express my opinion. My husband leaves in the middle, so we don't have a good conversation.

R: If your husband doesn't listen to you, he just leave?

Sunflower: I want to sit down and talk like this until the end, but he cuts me off with, "That can't be done. It's definitely not okay. When I listen to other people's stories, I see that they take care of their wives and talk to each other. But her husband don't have that kind of mind at all.

R: Is consideration what you need from your husband?

Sunflower: Yes. I feel happy and loved. It feels like my anxious mind is finally being lifted. It feels like it's being blown away through the air. (session 12)



Figure IV-63. clouds are floating around

Figure IV-63 depicts a frustrated heart being released through clouds. Sunflower felt the thought, "As a mother, let's not be stubborn and not hurt our children. Let's not harm others and praise them." She expressed her desire to let go of greed, empty her mind, and live a peaceful life, but then expressed her anger as she shared her complaints about her husband.

Sunflower: I've always loved clouds. Clouds are reminder to empty my mind and live like this, and water is reminder to flow... and dirt returns to a handful of dirt. I'm trying to live without being greedy, but I keep doing it like that, so I sometimes think, "I shouldn't be doing this," and then I get angry. I don't understand why people's minds are like this. (session 12)

Many of her conflicts with her husband revolved around money. After living with frequent complaints, she finally had the opportunity to boldly ask him for money. He hadn't given her a salary, and Sunflower, who had been dissatisfied with having to live on a meager budget, fell ill and had to spend a lot of money on hospital bills. Sunflower, having worked hard to raise her children and buy a home, felt she deserved her share. She decided to dissuade her children from paying her hospital bills. And dictated to her husband. Recently, she asked him for money for her own use, in addition to living expenses. She's even started saving for food. Still, she can't afford to buy anything fancy.

At the end of art therapy and during a follow-up interview, Sunflower's husband told her that when he got angry, he would nag her, tell her to put her things away, and even swear at her. In the past, she was so anxious and her heart was ponding that she couldn't say a word, but now she can. Recently, Sunflower got angry and said the same thing her husband that he had said to her. Although she was advised that "acting out"—expressing one's emotions without managing them—can be counterproductive (Ju-ri Ae, 2010). Sunflower, who had been unable to express her emotions in front of her husband, her felt relieved when she vent her anger to him. Sunflower can make eye contact and speak clearly in front of others. She said she seems to have changed a lot since having art therapy.

Sunflower, who diligently prepared meals for her husband for decades, began to feel more and more ill as she grew older and began to think that she needed to take better care of her body. She used to do her housework until midnight and then go to bed, but she've been putting it off. Lately, maybe because she've been praising her husband so much, he hasn't gotten angry so often when he tells her to clean up, so she've been thinking about giving him more positive things to say. These days, she lives comfortably, like someone with a swollen liver. She told her husband that she bought instant foods when he come home late. So he makes a noodle dish for himself. Sunflower puts her husband's leftover alcohol in his cupboard. Then, he drinks in moderation. Like the sunflower's long-held wish, she strives to find peace of mind.

Sunflower, as she has always done, will persevere through difficult times and continue to support and care for her family. She said she was happy with her husband and children.

After the art therapy session, in a follow-up interview, she shared her changed life and her resentment. She then wrote about her resolve to live life with an open mind and patience.

- Written in the fourth interview -

I will keep my watch repaired so that it doesn't break (and stay healthy), and I will not get swayed by the slightest breeze and keep running forward diligently, good days will come. I am happy. I have a healthy husband, and I am always grateful and thankful for my son, son-in-law, and daughter, who work hard. I will leave behind three names. Everything in this world is not mine. I will abandon everything. I will live without hurting others, supporting them when they are lacking, covering for their faults, and being considerate and generous. I will live diligently, thinking only good thoughts. I hope you are always happy.

## V. The Meaning of Mindful Focusing Oriented Art therapy

This chapter presents the meaning of the process in which researcher and client experience mindfulness-focused art therapy (mFOAT). Mindful focusing oriented art therapy restored autonomy to suppressed research subjects through the process of feeling and expressing felt sense. This process reconnected a broken relationship and allowed me to live a life that was truly my own. Furthermore, the art therapy process itself became a tool for observing and healing my body.

The experiences generated through the Mindfulness Focusing Art Therapy (mFOAT) process are as follows: First, it facilitates expression through various media. Because mFOAT utilizes a variety of media and methods, such as body focus, breathing, physical movement, and artistic expression, it facilitates expression.

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Lee Mo-young (2019) discussed the importance of embodied cognition in art psychotherapy. She argued that most unconscious aspects of the mind are formed within the dynamic relationships between mind, body, and environment at the sensory level, and that emphasizing only the rational and thought-based aspects of the mind in terms of acquiring

knowledge and understanding the world is incomplete. Therefore, the discussion of the mind should be expanded to encompass the processes by which organisms discover and construct themselves as they interact with their environment, based on the open, cyclical self-organizing processes that serve to communicate with the body(이정모, 2009; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2013, re-appropriation).

Second, they experience and realize change through physical sensation. It wasn't just the art therapy sessions that transformed the client; the process of experiencing art therapy and the atmosphere within the art therapy space influenced their transformation. Furthermore, the process of changing bodily sensations through imagination and the images that emerged, as well as the sensations and breathing experienced when interacting with the art medium, also contributed to the change.

Sunflower's life changed as she gained new experiences. In her fifties, she began working and in her sixties, she began studying counseling. She learned that she couldn't just live obediently, so she expressed her feeling to her husband and changed her life. Sunflower's love of learning allowed her to change quickly while participating in research. Learning is acquiring knowledge through the head, but it is also acquired through 'experience' by living in a new environment, seeing, hearing, and actually doing things. She said that she felt a lot of generosity and calm in the atmosphere of the art therapy room and she thought that she should do the same.

Guided imagery is a technique that uses images to maintain a desired state of body and mind.(Jeong Hyeong-cheol, 2011). Mindfulness-focused art therapy utilizes guided imagery to maintain health and facilitate the treatment of illness. Mindfulness-focused art therapy (mFOAT) changed the feeling of the body through imagination and imaging. It also changed the state of mind. Sunflower reported that practicing mindful breathing warmed her body and brought a sense of peace. As this process continued, her heart palpitations and anxiety decreased.

The body represents an unthought-prone existence, closer to reality. Merleau-Ponty, starting from the primal importance of perception, attempts to elucidate our entire experience. It is like the world before we are conscious of that. Focusing considers the core of therapy to be the awareness and response to even unconscious aspects of the body through bodily sensations.

Third, becoming aware of the feelings of life leads to encourages change. Expressive art activities in this research have enabled her to become aware of herself and her environment and to change them. Artistic expression allows her to reflect on my current situation and emotions, and through the process of objectively observing the results, she

gains self-awareness.

In Mindfulness Focusing Art Therapy (mFOAT), the process of noticing and accepting with a non-judgmental and focusing attitude played a role in facilitating change. Feeling the sensing of felt sense during the focusing process accesses inner awareness (Rappaport, 2014), and mindfulness enhances awareness by paying attention (Rome, 2014). Being aware involves the process of re-evaluating what might be overlooked in life, realizing the current state of affairs, observing the world around us, and asking ourselves questions about the direction of our future actions. The answer to the question, "How should I live?" could be sought from experts or those with more experience. However, I believe the best teacher is myself. After all, I know myself best.

Fourth, I experienced a cycle of adaptation and change in my life's journey. While people were born with no choice but to adapt to their circumstances, art therapy provided them with an opportunity for change. As she changed, her attitude towards people around me changed, and it also became an opportunity for her to let go of her desire for her family.

Sunflower get comfortable through art therapy and realized that she needed to take care of herself. And she tried to make others comfortable, and her relationships changed. And she said that she wanted to give up her greed. Because her thinking about winning over her husband or comparing herself to others makes her miserable.

The healing experiences is as follows. First, the research subjects who felt they had difficulty expressing themselves learned various ways to express themselves other than through language, and were able to express themselves in many ways that they had not been able to do in daily life. Interaction and integration on the physical, mental, and psychological levels are essential for healing, and using the body is an efficient and direct path to the unconscious(im-yongja, 2004).

Second, psychological relaxation in art therapy allows for a sense of safety and freedom of expression (Lee Young-seok, Choi Oe-seon, 1996). In the beginning stages of focusing art therapy, the work of feeling the texture of the medium while kneading clay and painting with paint, as well as the felt sense, and the physical movement along with breathing helped to eliminate awkwardness and facilitate psychological expression. Communicating about their current feelings and feeling safe within the therapy room provided the foundation for the client to begin art therapy.

Third, during the mindfulness process, research participants felt at ease as they brought their bodies into a safe state through breathing, and they also developed awareness and compassion for others. It eliminated physical symptoms such as sunflower's palpitations and stuffiness, and also calmed anxiety. The process of expressing herself through physical

movement helped her release energy. Furthermore, the mindfulness process and physical movement served as a preparatory step to relieve tension before expressing herself.

As I proceeded with my research, I felt that I had been busy doing something in my life, and I had been satisfied with it. Living hard and fiercely, I thought I should prepare something to be comfortable in the future.

I remembered filling out the things that I had not achieved in my past life with negative thoughts and words. People regret and criticize the past when they want and things do not go as they thought. In focusing, it said that he can grow by changing his expectations and viewpoints to change his thoughts with new images and beliefs as in hypnosis (Cornell, 1998). Focusing does not focus on criticism or distress itself. It focuses on how you feel about it and responds to how you will move forward. I want to plan for the future with positive thoughts and language so that I can devote my energy to planning for the future rather than the past.

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