



# 6th International Prader-Willi Syndrome Caregivers' Conference

21-23 May 2024, Berlin, Germany

## Therapy options Art and ABA

[www.ipwso.org](http://www.ipwso.org)

## Workshop Summary

### Day 1: Art as a therapeutic approach for people with Prader-Willi syndrome

**Workshop Leader:**

Tovi Florsheim, MA, Art Therapist, BA in Special Education, Israel

**Workshop description:**

People with PWS can have behavioural issues such as argumentativeness, temper outbursts, emotional management difficulties, control issues, and anxiety. Emotional therapy may help them to unload, face and acknowledge their feelings.

Many people with PWS have good visual perception and we can utilise that strength for emotional therapy through art.

Using art as a therapeutic tool allows the individual with PWS to be able to connect to the self, to express themselves, fulfil the basic need to be seen and leave a handprint, improving self-image, self-satisfaction, and success.

Some people with PWS have trouble understanding abstract concepts and therefore, they will struggle to understand their feelings and express them. Through the experience and the presence of an actual product, there is a concrete and visual manifestation of those emotions that allows a therapeutic conversation about them, among other therapeutic processes.

Using art as a therapeutic tool can increase confidence, sense of existence, improve self-image, satisfaction, relaxation, sense of accomplishment, self-expression, choice, and sense of control. These feelings are a great foundation for behavioural improvement and better quality of life.

In this workshop participants were invited to experience this powerful approach of art therapy for people with PWS, in order to raise awareness with the caregiver community, and encourage the use of it.

Day 1 of the Therapy options workshop was a hands-on, interactive afternoon session where participants were invited to create their own art using a variety of art materials which were made available during the workshop.

**The presentation used to facilitate the workshop is available [here](#).** It contains helpful details on different art materials such as:

- Beads
- Mandalas
- Gouache
- Mosaic
- Glue
- Clay
- Textile
- Examples of artwork by people with PWS
- Why Art therapy is effective for people with PWS

Throughout the workshop, Tovi gave examples and described the different ways that Art therapy can be individualised to the person, and benefit people with PWS.



A workshop table set with materials for participants to use

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## Workshop materials

Participants had the opportunity do work with lots of different media during the workshop.

If you would like to experiment with different materials in your work with people with PWS, consider using some of the below.

- disposable tablecloths
- paint brushes
- gouache paint colors (black, white, red, blue, yellow, green)
- pallets (for colors)
- small sponges (for coloring)
- bristol paper or card of varying sizes
- chipboard (graphic cardboard)
- empty jars (it can be empty jam jars etc.)
- kinds of colorful fabric (can be from old drapes etc.)
- fabric glue
- plastic glue
- mixed buttons
- mosaic stones
- mandala coloring papers (around 15 mandalas)
- pencil colors
- rolling pin
- clay and clay tools set
- beads (different sizes and kinds)
- wire (silicon or fishing line) or string or yarn
- disposable aprons
- sellotape



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## Participant Comments

This comment was recorded in a post-conference survey sent to all delegates.

*I found the workshop on therapy and art extremely successful. Tovi started with a practical part, which made it very easy for us participants to start a conversation. I also learned that the activities the residents choose can provide a lot of insight into how they are doing.*

Dinh Thi Thanh Van, Clinic staff, psychologist, at Morning Star Center, Vietnam also shared about her experience of attending the Therapy Options workshop in a post-conference report.

*I participated in workshops such as Therapy options: Art and ABA; Understanding behaviours, Aging, etc. Thanks to the experts' presentation, I learned more about the hidden causes of challenging behaviors and how to help reduce these unwanted behaviours in children and people with PWS as well as the changes in needs and methods of care and intervention for people with PWS in different age groups.*

*At my center, teachers face many difficulties in teaching and providing intervention for children with disabilities and children with PWS because the children with special needs develop many challenging behaviors.*

*After returning to my country, I gathered the knowledge I gained about behaviors and ABA therapy and shared it with teachers and clinic staff, to help the caregivers and teachers better understand about the causes of children's behavior, and find the most effective ways to reduce their children's unsocial and challenging behaviors. Therefore, we can contribute to improve the effectiveness of care and intervention for children with intellectual disabilities and children with PWS at the center.*

## Workshop Summary

### Day 2: Applied Behaviour Analysis

**Workshop Leader:**

Vikacha Phiri, M.A., BCBA, LABA, Latham Centers Inc.  
Massachusetts, USA

**Workshop description:**

This workshop catered to caregivers and professionals caring for individuals diagnosed with Prader Willi syndrome (PWS), aiming to highlight the strategic integration of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into daily behaviour management. Attendees identified proactive strategies rooted in behaviour analysis already incorporated into therapeutic practice and how the application of principles and techniques of ABA further enhances therapeutic treatment in individuals with PWS.

Key focuses included identifying existing behaviour analytic strategies employed in therapy and understanding their effectiveness. Moreover, participants explored the customisation of behaviour management approaches for individuals with PWS, fostering independence and improving overall quality of life.

Both informative and interactive, the workshop began with a presentation overviewing basic concepts of ABA including thorough assessment, individualised behavioural intervention planning, and skills building. Subsequently, attendees had the opportunity to apply knowledge covered in the presentation in small break-outs. This hands-on approach allowed participants to build and strengthen connections surrounding how behaviour analytic assessment and intervention can be a core component of strength-based, person-centered intervention planning that is tailored to individual needs.



Day 2 of the Therapy options workshop was a shorter 90-minute session on understanding and implementing Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) to support behaviour management for people with PWS.

**The presentation used to facilitate the workshop is available [here](#).** It includes:

- Behavioural features of PWS
- Common behaviour management strategies
- Overview of ABA
- Assessment tools
- The behaviour plan
- Helpful reference links

Participants were given case study examples and also played an online quiz about their understanding of ABA which sparked discussion.

### Participant comments

Van went on in her report to specifically reference working with Vikacha in this workshop and how the experience would benefit people with PWS in Southeast Asia.

*While attending the workshop, I connected with experts on PWS. I had an opportunity to connect and discuss with Ms. Phiri, an ABA therapist from the USA and Mr Norbert Hödebeck, an expert on PWS from Germany.*

*I exchanged ideas and discussed with them about training opportunities and the plans of organizing workshops on PWS in the Southeast Asia region in the future, helping to raise awareness about PWS in the Southeast Asia countries and improving quality of life and intervention support services for local people with PWS.*

Dinh Thi Thanh Van  
and Vikacha Phiri



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## Conclusion

By the workshop's conclusion, attendees were equipped with practical knowledge and a deeper understanding of how incorporation of strategies and principles of ABA can have positive impacts in their caregiving roles or professional practice. This interactive session empowered participants with actionable insights to enhance the lives of individuals with PWS through individualised behaviour management.







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