

Imagery and non-verbal interventions to cope with fear of disease recurrence and fear of death

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Jan Taal, Drs is a certified healthcare psychologist and expert for the Dutch Association for Psycho-oncology and a psychotherapist and trainer for the Cancer Care Centre and Amsterdam School for Imagery in the Netherlands; co-founder and chairman of the Foundation Cancer in Images (Stichting Kanker in Beeld). This foundation promotes the use of imagination and creativity in many ways, imagining, drawing, painting, sculpting, writing, poetry, singing, etcetera. In collaboration with the Dutch Cancer Society Jan coordinated two large groundbreaking events of art and performances of patients coping with cancer.

In 2009 Jan started the Imagery Toolbox Project in order to provide easily accessible imagery and creativity tools for coping with cancer. In 2017 the third English edition was published.

Workshop introduction

Fear of disease recurrence and fear of death are among the most debilitating factors for mental fitness. In many cases, a purely cognitive approach to treatment is insufficient. Non-verbal methods such as imagery and simple creative expression often provide direct access to the deeper sources of self-reinforcement and can help to find self-confidence and meaning, methods that have been shown to be effective (Rieger et al, 2021; Alma & Taal, 2014; Lombard 2020; Taal, 2017).

For healthcare providers, imagery and non-verbal methods can be a useful and rewarding addition to their package of interventions.

Imagery and art therapy interventions are used in many different psychological traditions worldwide. In the workshop case histories and the theoretical foundations of the aforementioned non-verbal methods are presented.

In addition the participants are offered some accessible practical exercises to experience for themselves, including the online imagery tool 'Strengthen yourself in times of uncertainty or fear', which was developed in 2021.

After the workshop, the participant gained insight into the methodology and into the applications in practice and will be able to apply some simple non-verbal interventions with patients regarding fear of disease recurrence and fear of death.