Art Therapy

as one of the various creative therapeutic approaches that can be used to provide emotional support to children

Some other creative therapeutic approaches:
• Art Therapy,
• Play Therapy
• Dance Movement Therapy,
• Dramatherapy and
• Music Therapy
Art Therapy

presented by

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When young people are faced with difficulties it may be hard for them to express their feelings in a verbal way.

Art Therapy aim to help young people to be understood and promote their emotional and social wellbeing.
What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art as a form of communication.

Art therapy is not dependent on spoken language.

Therefore it can be helpful to anyone who may find it difficult to express thoughts and feelings verbally.
What is Art Therapy?

In art therapy, children and young people use art (paint, clay and other materials) and play, to explore and express feelings.

There is no expectation or demand on the young person of being good at art or having previous experience in order to benefit from art therapy.
What is Art Therapy?

Expression through art and play provides an alternative but important opportunity to understand the young person’s emotional life and his or her ways of relating to other people.
What is the training for art therapist?

The Art Therapy training courses are at Masters level and are completed over two years full time or three years part time.

Applicants are usually graduates in Art and Design or are qualified art teachers or have a first degree in a relevant discipline like sociology or psychology.

Applicants are also expected to have working experience in these fields.
What is the training for art therapist?

The training is theoretical, practical and experiential and includes:

• 120 days clinical placement over the duration of the course

• Lectures, discussions and seminars in psychological development, counselling and psychodynamic theory

• Academic assessment by essays, portfolio presentations and a final thesis

• Personal therapy is compulsory during the whole of the training
Art therapists are

- sensitive to the way children may communicate without words

- working in a child-centred approach:
  - importance of holding back
  - not “rescuing” the child
  - non-judgemental attitude
  - being at their level

- working with directive and non-directive approaches depending on individual needs

- aware of the difference between art therapy and art activities

- informed with lots of ideas for therapeutic activities
Similarities and differences between art therapy and art activities

“Art therapy” and “arts activities” there may be cause confusion on what they are and how they differ from each other.

What they have in common is that the child works towards the creation of artwork and therefore creativity is involved.
Similarities and differences between art therapy and art activities

However they are different in the skills required by the practitioner and in their overall philosophical assumptions and orientations

I am now going to talk about some of these differences
Art activities

Art activities have the primary goal of creating a finished artwork within a fun and learning environment.

The facilitator who is trained or experienced in art making may influence the creation of the artwork or give advice.
Art activities

The child may be expected to make use of a set of skills that can be taught, practised, evaluated or judged aesthetically.

The artwork produced may be exhibited or assessed.
Art therapy

Art therapy’s primary goal is the intentional use of the arts for psychological change as a form of therapy within a therapeutic context.

The artwork produced in art therapy it is not intended as a product in itself.
Art therapy

Drawing an ‘ugly’ picture or destroying a picture is in art therapy an important and valuable expression.

Therefore the artwork does not have to be aesthetically pleasing or finished to be valuable.
Art therapy

In art therapy
the therapist acts as a facilitator
a guide and a witness
to help the child
to understand feelings and needs

Art in this context is the means to self-discovery
and the link between
the child and the therapist

The art materials chosen
and the way feelings are expressed
are important aspects
of the creative process
Art therapy

Artwork in art therapy provides the focus of the communication and acts as a vehicle for understanding growth and change in the child.

There is an interaction between the child and the therapist in which they work together to understand the art process and product of the session.

This is the so-called “triangular relationship” between the therapist, the child and the artwork.
The creative process

The reason why I chose to train and work as an art therapist is that I highly value the creative process.

I personally believe that creativity is something that everyone has within themselves yet the process and results are different for different people.
The creative process

Anyone can potentially embark on a creative process and a creative process does not have to result in an aesthetic or finished product.

One can’t “teach” creativity in the sense of “teaching” maths, science or humanities classes, but one can assist and guide people to get in touch with their inherent creativity.
The creative process

As an art therapist
I have faith in the arts
as having an important healing role
to play within therapy

However for art making
to be a form of therapy
it needs to be contextually located
within a witnessed
and supportive environment
Therapeutic alliance

A special relationship forms between the therapist and the young person

Within this "therapeutic alliance“ the young person feels free to express themselves

Because the therapist:
• accepts whatever is expressed, without criticism
• witnesses artwork (or actions/words)
• reflects it back to the young person, in a way that may help them
Holding Environment (a safe one)

The therapy room and the therapist provide an holding environment; an environment which is safe, where the young person is free to express themselves.

Holding was defined by Winnicott:

- It refers to a mother physically holding a baby, and also to creating a safe and supportive environment.

- A mother that is “good enough” as she provides enough support but not too much, so the child is safe to explore, and gradually learns its limitations.
Therapeutic Contract involves:

- Consistent time
- Consistent settings
- Time boundaries
- Safety:
  - Confidentiality
  - Limits of confidentiality
  - Talk in the “I” (only for groups)
- Artwork kept for the length of therapeutic work
- No mobile phones
- Food and drink agreement
Conclusion

• Art therapy involves assessment as well as treatment
• It focuses on the creative process and the artwork as a means to discover the self

Extra Info:

An art therapist is registered with a professional association; the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) [www.baat.org](http://www.baat.org)

The art therapist is compelled to practice within specific codes of ethics and is regulated by the Health Professional Council (HPC) [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org)