

ART THERAPY'S NOTABLE IMPACT ON EATING DISORDERS AND HEALTHY EATING

"Art therapy has been found to be extremely effective with clients with eating disorders, as it facilitates greater awareness of thwarted needs, desires, and distresses and provides simultaneously, a metaphorical and concrete outlet for expression that promotes a greater emotional vocabulary, both visually and verbally. It is a way to meet clients where they are, in an honoring way."

—Michelle L. Dean, MA, ATR-BC, LPC, CGP, DVATA HLM

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Engaging Clients in Discovery & Awareness

"Clients struggling with eating disorders also often struggle with identifying and expressing their emotional experience. Art therapy is a natural fit for this population. Obsession with food and weight are often attempts to cope with deeper emotions such as depression, rage, loss, and powerlessness. When the focus on the food is transferred into an engagement with the art materials, the client develops a new 'language' for expressing the hidden feelings that drive the eating disorder. Body image, emotion regulation skills, self-esteem and a sense of autonomy can all be strengthened through art therapy." —Amanda Bechtel, ATR, LPC

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About Art Therapy Art therapists are Master's level and above professionals who use art as a means of communications and support. The art-making process is used to guide clients in attaining enhanced communication and socialization; easing stress and pain; gaining resilience and coping skills; and, increasing a sense of empowerment. In order to properly treat and protect those seeking assistance, the [American Art Therapy Association](#) strongly promotes programs that employ art therapists credentialed through the [Art Therapy Credentials Board](#). The ATCB defines appropriate and established standards for art therapy education, training, ethics, and competence in practice.

"Mindful eating is becoming more and more important, not only as a tool for self care and self awareness, but also as a vehicle for self- and social compassion." —Patricia Isis, Ph.D., ATR-BC, LMHC

MODEL ART THERAPY PROGRAMS

“Art therapy is effective in addressing the treatment goals of people with eating disorders, and has literally saved lives. Art therapy promotes self-efficacy, trust, new insights and awareness; provides freedom of expression; and, assists in confronting maladaptive belief systems about body image and food, among many other benefits.”

—Donna Betts, PhD, ATR-BC

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Inpatient

Eating Recovery Center Denver, CO

The program emphasizes the development of lifelong recovery skills in a safe, structured and supportive environment. Full-day programming includes opportunities to practice interactions and challenges outside of treatment through interactive sessions, including art therapy.

[Click here for more information](#)

Outpatient

Pershing Turner Centers Annapolis, MD

Pershing Turner offers outpatient treatment, education, support, and referral services to children, adolescents, and adults with eating, weight, and body image disorders including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, compulsive eating/binge eating disorder and related issues.

[Click here for more information](#)

Private Practice

The Center for Psyche & the Arts, LLC Offices in Berwyn and Lansdowne, PA

The Center offers a warm and compassionate approach to psychotherapy and counseling services for children, adults, families, and groups. The Center's scope of practice includes: art psychotherapy services, continuing education, and personal enrichment opportunities such as lectures, classes, workshops, and courses for children and adults. Areas of expertise include working with clients with eating disorders, self-injurious behaviors, traumatic experiences as well as mood and substance abuse issues.

[Click here for more information](#)

Partial Hospitalization

Riveredge Hospital Forest Park, IL

All ages (pediatric through older adults) are welcome in individual, group, and family settings. Daily sessions in a supportive environment encourage non-verbal reflection and expression of feelings.

[Click here for more information](#)

Special Events

Inside Out - NORMAL

This live program is curated and run by art therapists. Its "Gallery of Hope" illustrates how a clinician works with patients to create multi-media artwork highlighting the positive aspects of recovery, their new perspective of body image, and more.

[Click here for more information](#)

Self-Esteem Stomp - NORMAL

For this project, art therapists and teachers help create empowerment related signs that line the route of a fun-walk that is suitable for families and kids. The affirmation-based signs are created using an array of media and then line the route of the walk. After the event, therapists lead art-therapy exercises so participants in the walk experience healthy forms of coping through the arts.

[Click here for more information](#)

American Art Therapy Association is an organization of more than 5,000 professionals dedicated to the field of art therapy. Its mission is to serve its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge about art therapy.

OUTCOMES & MORE

“Art therapy became probably my strongest emotional outlet and kept me sane most days. Thank you for helping me to see life again and reclaim my own.”

—Client Testimonial

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[50 Ways To Soothe Yourself Without Food](#)

[Adult Art Psychotherapy: Issues & Applications](#)

[Anorexia Nervosa And Art Therapy: The Double Trap Of The Anorexic Patient](#)

[Arts Therapies And Clients With Eating Disorders: Fragile Board](#)

[Assessing Stress Reduction As A Function Of Artistic Creation](#)

[Body Image Art Therapy Session VIDEO](#)

[Bodyspeaks: Finding A Voice Through Art Therapy](#)

[But I Deserve This Chocolate!](#)

[Drawing From Within: Using Art To Treat Eating Disorders](#)

[Dying To Be Thin VIDEO](#)

[Eat, Drink, and Be Mindful](#)

[Eating Disorders and Magical Control of the Body: Treatment Through Art Therapy](#)

[Eating Disorders In Men And Boys](#)

[Eating Mindfully](#)

[Experiential Therapies For Eating Disorders](#)

[Expressive Arts Therapy VIDEO \(click on blue key\)](#)

[Finding Your Voice Through Creativity](#)

[Identifying Conflicts Of Anorexia Nervosa](#)

[More Than Just A Meal: The Art Of Eating Disorders](#)

[Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life](#)

[Taking Weight Problems To School](#)

[The Creative Therapies And Eating Disorders](#)

[The Healing Power Of Art](#)

[The Illusionists VIDEOS](#)

[Thin VIDEO](#)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Eating disorders are often tied to other underlying psychiatric issues, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and substance abuse. People with eating disorders can often express feelings and explore conflicts non-verbally before they can put them into words. Art therapy is an effective way for patients to identify and explore body image issues and the way they affect recovery.”

-Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt

RESOURCES

"Developing a 'voice' is crucial in the treatment of people with eating disorders. The art that an individual creates can provide a voice for aspects of experiences and feelings for which there are no words, and provide a bridge to direct communication."

—Christianne Strang, PhD, ATR-BC

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[About Face](#)

[Academy For Eating Disorders](#)

[Alliance For Eating Disorders Awareness](#)

[American Psychological Association](#)

[Anorexia Nervosa & Related Eating Disorders](#)

[Association For Size, Diversity, And Health](#)

[Association For Women In Psychology](#)

[Binge Eating And Bulimia: Psychological Research](#)

[Binge Eating Disorder Association](#)

[Bulimia Guide](#)

[Center For Eating Disorders At Sheppard Pratt](#)

[Centers For Disease Control-High School Screening](#)

[Dads And Daughters](#)

[Dartmouth College / C. Everett Koop Institute](#)

[Eating Disorder Hope](#)

[Eating Disorders Anonymous](#)

[Eating Disorders Coalition](#)

[Eating Disorders Information Network](#)

[Eating Disorders Referral And Information Center](#)

[Eating Disorders Treatment Help](#)

[Families Empowered And Supporting Treatment Of Eating Disorders](#)

[Families USA](#)

[Gurl](#)

[Gurze Books](#)

[Healing Power Of Arts - NORMAL Blog](#)

[Helpguide.Org: Eating Well Help Center](#)

[Intl Assn Of Eating Disorders Professionals](#)

[Kids Health](#)

[Mayo Clinic](#)

[Medlineplus](#)

[Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association](#)

[National Assn For Males With Eating Disorders](#)

[National Association Of Anorexia Nervosa And Associated Disorders](#)

[National Association To Advance Fat Acceptance](#)

[National Eating Disorder Screening Program](#)

[National Eating Disorders Association](#)

[National Institute Of Mental Health](#)

[National Institute Of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)

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[Overeaters Anonymous](#)

[Something Fishy](#)

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Svcs Adm](#)

[The Body Positive](#)

[The Dana Foundation](#)

[The Eating Disorder Foundation](#)

[The Elisa Project](#)

[The Joy Project](#)

[Treatment, Healing, Education Center For Disordered Eating](#)

[We Are The Real Deal - NORMAL Blog](#)

[Women's Health.Gov](#)