Implement A Successful Art Therapy Program With Youth Affected By Traumatic Events & Health Challenges

Youth often find non-verbal expression the only outlet to their intense feelings of fear, isolation, sadness, anger, and loss. An art therapy program helps kids build resilience and move beyond life’s hurdles, promotes self-awareness, improves self-esteem and competence, develops coping and control skills, and leads to a stronger future. Explore the many beneficial outcomes of an effective art therapy program.

Engaging Children & Young Adults In Creative Discovery & Healing

“One important aspect of art therapy is the creation of a safe space where traumatic feelings can be processed. Sometimes the verbal skill is lacking to describe traumatic experiences and by creating art, the person can feel more confident.”


OUTSTANDING PROGRAMS & EVENTS
Community
Early Childhood
Juvenile Justice
Medical
Mental Health
Military Families
Rehabilitation
Residential Intervention
Special Event
Other

OUTCOMES & APPLICATIONS
Art Therapy is an effective, versatile treatment modality that addresses a myriad of complex issues such as Abuse, Adolescence, Bullying, Death & Bereavement, Disasters, Homelessness, Illness, Lifestyle Choices, Sexual Abuse, Terrorism, and Violent Crime.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

RESOURCES
Find an Art Therapist
Fund a Program
Corporate & Foundation Grants
Government Grants
Useful Links

LEARN MORE
Contacts
Articles & Videos
Throughout life, our bodies, minds, activities, families, friends, and living environments change. Disturbing events can be doubly unsettling to youth. Art therapy can help in any setting, through any stage, by providing a safe, supportive, creative and positive experience to help ease transition, depression, and fear. Integrating a healing, trauma-informed approach to care greatly reduces the harmful health impact of violence and trauma on the young.

COMMUNITY
Wraparound Orange / Orange County, FL
The program formed a partnership with the local Neighborhood Center for Families site to emphasize children’s mental health and target families within the community’s high-crime zip codes. Currently working with youth aged 12 and under, and their families.

EARLY CHILDHOOD
Project ABC / Los Angeles, CA
The program is designed to create a system of care for young children who are in need of mental health services in the Los Angeles area. The goal is to ensure that children birth to five years have access to mental health services that are family-centered, strength-based, and culturally competent.

JUVENILE JUSTICE
Impact / Lansing, MI
The program is a partnership of child and family-service agencies working with youth and families that strives to build and enhance home- and community-based services for young people involved with the juvenile justice system and/or Department of Human Services.

MEDICAL
Children’s National Medical Center / Washington, DC
The New Horizons program helps children transcend the hospital experience. Activities encourage continued learning, promote wellness through self-expression, and speed healing.

MENTAL HEALTH
WIN Georgia / Ft. Oglethorpe, GA
A regional effort serving children between the ages of birth and 21 with a diagnosed mental illness. The program helps families handle a child’s behavior and offers help finding and coordinating necessary services.

MILITARY FAMILIES
Operation Oak Tree / Chicago, IL
The program assists military children and families throughout the cycle of deployment. Its mission is to foster personal growth, deepen interpersonal roots, strengthen coping strategies, and to make it easier for families to branch out into their communities for support.

REHABILITATION
Inspirations For Youth & Families / Ft. Lauderdale, FL
The purpose of the program is to help teens express concepts that they may not be able to articulate. The drawing, painting, collage, or sculpture can then help bridge artistic expression into verbal expression. And from there, healing begins.

RESIDENTIAL
Daytop New Jersey / Mendham, NJ
The program offers a variety of treatment programs; all of which are committed to working with those adolescents who have a diagnosis of a co-occurring mental health disorder in addition to their substance abuse disorder.

SPECIAL EVENT
Community Initiatives Foundation / Baton Rouge, LA
The collected art and the videotaped interviews of children and youth who experienced the trauma of Hurricane Katrina are a powerful testimony of their needs as well as the positive impact of a trained response.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS & EVENTS
Click here for more information
Implementation Tools

There are a number of accessible options for implementing an appropriate, thriving art therapy program. Credentialed art therapists are experienced professionals that work with children and youth to help advance their confidence, resilience, self-esteem, and bring promise to the future.

This user-friendly electronic toolkit was developed to assist the many diverse groups serving the youth population throughout the nation in initiating or expanding an art therapy program. Credentialed art therapists hold either a master’s or doctoral degree in art therapy, and are best qualified to implement a beneficial, therapeutic, effective program.

“Among even very young children, ages 18 to 36 months, exposure to potentially traumatic events is associated with a range of socio-emotional and behavioral problems that may compromise healthy development and place them at risk for persistent serious psychological problems later in childhood and in adulthood. More than 35 percent of children exposed to a single traumatic event will develop a serious mental health problem.”  -Turning Point
There are a number of important social and therapeutic benefits that are advanced through art therapy. Research and study clearly reveal art therapy’s positive impact with regard to health, cognition, social interaction, trauma, stress reduction, anxiety, confidence, abuse, and most of life’s challenges. Art Therapy aids children and youth of all ages – from toddlers to tweens, and teens to young adults.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Providing children and youth with timely, appropriate services promotes effective coping and resilience. The following selections provide additional information and research relating to the treatment of trauma-related issues.

- Adverse Childhood Experiences Reported By Adults, Five States
- American Psychological Association, Resilience Guide For Parents & Teachers
- Art Making As A Component And Facilitator Of Resiliency With Homeless Youth
- Art Therapy For Adolescents With PTSD Symptoms: A Pilot Study
- Art Therapy May Improve Quality Of Life In Cancer Patients
- Art Therapy With Childhood Tsunami Survivors In Sri Lanka
- Art Therapy With Sexually Abused Children & Adolescents: Extended Research Study
- Beyond The Orphanages: Art Therapy With Russian Children
- Childhood Abuse & Mental Health Indicators Among Ethnically Diverse LGB Adults
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Effective For Children & Adolescents Exposed To Trauma
- Coming Out Through Art: A Review Of Art Therapy With LGBT Clients
- Coping With Traumatic Events
- Creative Art Therapy Groups: A Treatment Modality For Psychiatric Outpatients
- Emotional Wellness: Collection Of Articles, American Academy Of Pediatrics
- Empowering The Traumatized Child Through The Use Of Art & Action
- Forgiveness Illuminated: Holocaust Survivors' Testimonials Shed Light
- Functions Of Art-Making In CISD With Children & Youth
- Medical Art Therapy With Kids
- Mental Health: Report Of The Surgeon General
- Raising Self-Esteem In Female Juvenile Offenders
- Reducing PTSD Symptoms In Pediatric Trauma Patients
- Testing The Efficacy Of A Creative Arts Intervention
- The Effectiveness Of Art Therapy Interventions in Pediatric Trauma Patients
- Treatment of Child Crime Victims
- Understanding The Near-Death Experience Through Art
- Using Art In Trauma Recovery With Children
- Working With Children Exposed To Domestic Violence
- Working With Survivors Of Torture
American Art Therapy Association

Resources

Now, more than ever, valuable resources exist to assist in the funding, development, staffing, and implementation of a successful art therapy program. Public, private, nonprofit, health and research sectors, and others offer financial and organizational support.

Funding Alternatives: Corporate & Foundation Government

Art therapy is an effective, proven treatment modality and has demonstrated that it can enhance mental health of all ages. Art therapy greatly benefits children and young adult trauma survivors, and helps them break through their silence, confusion, fear, and anger . . . facilitating communication and recovery.

Useful Links* The American Art Therapy Association neither endorses any specific training, service, or provider listed; nor is responsible for the content found on the websites listed.

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Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
American Art Therapy Association Tip Sheet
Best Practices By System Of Care Communities
Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2011 Report
Data On Children's Mental Health & Trauma
Early Childhood & Trauma Resources
Helping Children & Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma
My Feelings Coloring Book - Chinese, English, Spanish
Project Launch
Social Marketing & Drop-In Articles
Learn More

Art therapy is utilized in a wide array of settings to promote well-being, socialization, communication, and healing; ease stress, pain, and loss; improve cognitive and motor skills; and empower through end-of-life and transition concerns. There are a number of resources available to assist in developing, incorporating, expanding, or enhancing an art therapy program.